Weekly Compilation of

Presidential Documents

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Editor's Note: The President was at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, on November 28, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

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Statement on the 40th Anniversary of the Death of President John F. Kennedy

November 21, 2003

This weekend the American people turn our thoughts to images of 40 years ago and to the good and graceful life that ended on November 22, 1963. John F. Kennedy has been gone nearly as long as he lived, yet the memory of him still brings pride to our Nation and a feeling of loss that defies the passing of years.

We remember a man who welcomed great responsibilities and had a gift for awakening the idealism and sense of duty in others. We remember a leader who called our Nation to high purpose and saw America through grave dangers with calm, discernment, and personal courage. We recall, with much affection and respect, the charming and dignified manner that became familiar to us all in the years of President Kennedy's service.

On this day especially, we think of a young father whose wife and family faced sorrow with dignity and a courage of their own. America still misses our 35th President, and Laura and I join our fellow citizens in honoring the memory of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7738—Thanksgiving Day, 2003

November 21, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each year on Thanksgiving, we gather with family and friends to thank God for the many blessings He has given us, and we ask God to continue to guide and watch over our country.

Almost 400 years ago, after surviving their first winter at Plymouth, the Pilgrims celebrated a harvest feast to give thanks. George Washington proclaimed the first National Day of Thanksgiving in 1789, and Abraham Lincoln revived the tradition during the Civil War. Since that time, our citizens have paused to express thanks for the bounty of blessings we enjoy and to spend time with family and friends. In want or in plenty, in times of challenge or times of calm, we always have reasons to be thankful.

America is a land of abundance, prosperity, and hope. We must never take for granted the things that make our country great: a firm foundation of freedom, justice, and equality; a belief in democracy and the rule of law; and our fundamental rights to gather, speak, and worship freely.

These liberties do not come without cost. Throughout history, many have sacrificed to preserve our freedoms and to defend peace around the world. Today, the brave men and women of our military continue this noble tradition. These heroes and their loved ones have the gratitude of our Nation.

On this day, we also remember those less fortunate among us. They are our neighbors and our fellow citizens, and we are committed to reaching out to them and to all of those in need in our communities.

This Thanksgiving, we again give thanks for all of our blessings and for the freedoms we enjoy every day. Our Founders thanked the Almighty and humbly sought His wisdom and blessing. May we always live by that same trust, and may God continue to watch over and bless the United States of America.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim Thursday, November 27, 2003, as a National Day of

Thanksgiving. I encourage Americans to gather in their homes, places of worship, and community centers to share the spirit of understanding and prayer and to reinforce ties of family and community.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 10:46 a.m., November 24, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on November 25. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this proclamation. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Remarks on Arrival From the United Kingdom

November 21, 2003

Good evening. Laura and I have just returned from Great Britain, where we had a fantastic trip. Her Majesty the Queen was a great host. Of course, we spent some time today in Tony Blair's constituency, which was not only a lot of fun, but it was a chance to continue our dialog about how to fight and defeat terror. We've got a special relationship with Great Britain. That relationship was reaffirmed during the last 3 days.

Back here at home, I'm pleased that the Congress passed the Healthy Forests Initiative, which will help us maintain our national treasure, our forests, again providing a commonsense strategy and making sure that the fire hazards that we've seen over the last couple of summers are mitigated as best as possible.

Secondly, I was pleased that House of Representatives passed an energy bill. This Nation needs an energy bill. It needs an energy plan. A minority of Senators are holding it up. For the sake of our national security and economic security, the Senate has got to pass this bill.

And finally, as you know, the Medicare legislation is—will be debated tonight in the House of Representatives and eventually in the Senate. It is an important time for Members of the U.S. Congress to honor our obligations to our seniors by providing a modern Medicare system, a system that includes prescription drugs and choices for our seniors. I urge the House and the Senate to pass this good piece of legislation.

We're glad to be home. It's good to see you all. Good night. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:27 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Queen Elizabeth II and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7739—National Family Week, 2003

November 21, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

As Americans gather during Thanksgiving week, we honor our families, and we recognize the family as a source of help, hope, and stability for our citizens and for our country.

Strong families make our Nation better. They teach our children values and help them become responsible citizens. We must encourage families to be loving and compassionate, generous and supportive, and to serve and help others.

On this Thanksgiving week, we also pay respect to our brave military families whose loved ones are on active duty, many on the front lines of freedom in Iraq and Afghanistan. These families provide a bond of love and encouragement to our men and women in uniform as they defend liberty and protect our Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim November 23 through November 29, 2003, as National

Family Week. I invite the States, communities, and all the people of the United States to join together in observing this week with appropriate ceremonies and activities to honor our Nation's families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., November 25, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 22, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on November 26.

The President's Radio Address

November 22, 2003

Good morning. This week Congress made significant progress toward improving the lives of America's senior citizens. The House of Representatives passed legislation that would bring prescription drug coverage to Medicare and lead to health care choices for our seniors. This legislation, if also passed by the Senate, would represent the greatest improvement in senior health care since Medicare was enacted in 1965.

When these reforms take full effect, our seniors would see real savings in their health care costs. Within 6 months, seniors would be eligible for a drug discount card that would save them between 10 and 25 percent off the retail price of most drugs. When the full drug benefit arrives in 2006, all seniors become eligible for drug coverage for a monthly premium of about $35. For most seniors without coverage today, the Medicare drug plan would cut their annual drug bills roughly in half.

Seniors with the highest drug bills would save the most, and seniors with the greatest need would get the most help. Low-income seniors would pay a reduced premium or no premium at all for the new drug coverage. And low-income seniors would also have lower copayments for their medicines.

Here is an example of how this benefit would work. A senior taking drugs to treat arthritis, high cholesterol, and migraines has a typical drug bill of about $250 a month, or $3,000 a year. With this legislation, this retiree would save $1,680 after paying her insurance premiums—more than half her current drug costs.

Under the new reforms, seniors would have more choices of health care coverage. Should seniors want to stay in traditional Medicare and receive a prescription drug benefit, they would be able to do so. Some seniors may want expanded coverage for extended hospital stays or protection against high out-of-pocket medical expenses, or they may want the coverage that comes with managed care plans. Under the new law, all those choices would be available. With choice, seniors would have more control over their health care options, and health plans would compete for the business with better coverage.

We're on the verge of success because of bipartisan leadership and because of the support of many advocates for seniors, including the AARP. Throughout many months of discussion and debate, we've remained focused on the clear objective: to modernize and strengthen the Medicare system. And by working together, we're close to meeting that goal.

In the nearly 40 years since Medicare was launched, this is the most significant opportunity for any Congress to improve health coverage for our seniors. Now we're down to the final stages. This Congress will decide whether or not seniors will have prescription drug coverage under Medicare, and this Congress will decide whether America's seniors will have better health care choices.

I urge all Members of Congress to remember what is at stake and to remember the promise we have made to America's seniors. The quality of their health care and the future strength of Medicare depends on the passage of this much-needed legislation.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:35 p.m. on November 21 for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November

21 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Medicare Reform Legislation

November 22, 2003

The House's historic passage of the bipartisan Medicare bill brings seniors one step closer to a modern Medicare system, one that includes prescription drugs and choices for seniors. I applaud the House for meeting our obligations to America's seniors. Now it is time for the Senate to act. I urge the Senate to pass this good piece of legislation so that I can sign it into law.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.

Statement on Signing the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2004

November 22, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2559, the "Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2004." The Act appropriates funds for construction to support the operations of the U.S. Armed Forces and for military family housing.

Sections 107, 110, and 113 provide for notice to the Congress of relocation of activities between military installations, initiation of a new installation abroad, or U.S. military exercises involving $100,000 in construction costs. The Supreme Court of the United States has stated that the President's authority to classify and control access to information bearing on national security flows from the Constitution and does not depend upon a legislative grant of authority. Although notice can be provided in most situations as a matter of comity, situations may arise, especially in wartime, in which the President must act promptly under his constitutional grants of executive power and authority as Commander in Chief while protecting sensitive national security information. The executive branch shall construe these sections in a manner consistent with the constitutional authority of the President.

Section 119 provides for the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to Congress with details of proposed actions to encourage certain cooperating nations to assume a greater share of the common defense burden. Section 128 of the Act establishes a commission of eight congressionally-designated members to study the U.S. military facility structure overseas and provides for commission access to information. The executive branch shall construe sections 119 and 128 in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

George W. Bush

The White House,
November 22, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 2559, approved November 22, was assigned Public Law No. 108–132.

Remarks at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony

November 24, 2003

Thank you all. Welcome. Thanks for coming. Good morning, and welcome to the Rose Garden. In a moment you can come up and welcome our guest of honor, Stars the turkey. He looks pretty friendly. He actually looks well rested. You'd be well rested, too, if you had your own room in Hotel Washington here in Washington, DC. [*Laughter*] It sounds like Stars wants to give the speech.

I appreciate you joining me to give this turkey a Presidential pardon. Stars is a very special bird with a very special name. This year, for the first time, thousands of people voted on the White House web site to name the national turkey and the alternate turkey. "Stars" and "Stripes" beat out "Pumpkin" and "Cranberry." And it was a neck-to-neck race. [*Laughter*]

Under the official rules, the alternate turkey has an important role, not to be taken lightly. The rulebook states that an alternate turkey is chosen in case the national Thanksgiving turkey cannot fulfill his role in this

ceremony. It's kind of like being the Vice President. [*Laughter*]

Our Nation's sense of gratitude is the source of great generosity of our people. Some of the boys and girls here today have done their part this year. Fifth graders from Flint Hill School collected the fixings and made sandwiches for people at the local homeless shelter. Through your compassion, you're showing the goodness of America, and we are really proud of you. Thanks for doing that.

I want to thank our Secretary of Agriculture for joining us today. Secretary Ann Veneman is doing a great job for our country. I want to thank Bob Wright, who's the chairman of the National Turkey Federation, for joining today. I appreciate Dr. Alice Johnson, who's the president. Thanks for coming, Alice.

Today marks a—and continues a long White House tradition. We're honoring the beginning of a holiday season. It speaks well for America that one of our most important holidays is set aside for sharing and appreciating our blessings. Our Nation was founded by people of great accomplishment, great courage, and great humility. They believed not only in themselves but also in the goodness of God's wisdom and God's plan for every life. This American quality has endured throughout the generations. Americans are, at our best, are a reverent and a grateful people. Even in times of hardship, we see all around us gifts to be thankful for, our families and friends, the beautiful land we call home, and the freedom granted to us all.

This year, as in other times in our history, we can be especially grateful for the courage and faithfulness of those who defend us. Every man and woman who wears our country's uniform is a volunteer, facing hardships and sometimes peril, because they believe in this country and our cause. We're thinking of them and their families. We think of the military families that have suffered loss. We can be grateful to live in a country that has produced such good and brave people who stand between us and the dangers of the world.

On this holiday, we're reminded of our blessings. We're reminded of our responsibilities. Our Nation's sense of gratitude is the source of the great generosity and compassion of our people.

And now it's time to grant a little compassion to our guest of honor. I'm not sure why any turkey would want to reside at a place called Frying Pan Park. [*Laughter*] Maybe they explained the alternatives to him. [*Laughter*] In any case, off he goes. By virtue of the Presidential pardon, Stars will live out his days there at Kidwell Farm in Virginia. And so he won't be alone, I hereby pardon Stripes as well.

Happy Thanksgiving to you. May God bless you and your families. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 in Arlington, Virginia

November 24, 2003

Thank you for the warm welcome, and good morning. I'm honored to be here at the Pentagon with the men and women who are defending America and who are fighting the war on terror. America is counting on your skill and courage.

People in our military depend upon the support of the Congress and the President and the administration. Today, with the National Defense Authorization Act, our Government is meeting its obligations. We're sending a clear message: In a time of conflict and challenge, America stands with the United States military.

Mr. Secretary, you are doing a fantastic job for America. You lead with courage; you lead with clear vision; and you lead with strength. I appreciate General Dick Myers and the members of the Joint Chiefs who are with us. Thank you for your great service to our country. I want to thank the ranking enlisted personnel who are with us today, Sergeant Major John Estrada and Master Chief Petty Officer Terry Scott. I appreciate you all being up here as well. Thank you for your fine service. I want to thank the Department of Defense personnel who are with us today. Thank you for working with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz and

others for making sure the Pentagon does its job and does its job well.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here. I particularly want to single out Chairman Warner and Chairman Hunter: John Warner of Virginia, United States Senate; Duncan Hunter of California, the House of Representatives. I want to thank both of you for working on this important piece of legislation, for solving issues inside the bill, and getting a good bill to this desk. Thank you—[*inaudible*].

I also thank Senator Carl Levin, who's the ranking member, Senator Susan Collins from Maine, and Congressman Tom Davis for joining us on this stage and for their leadership in this important piece of legislation. I want to thank the other Members of the United States Senate and the House of Representatives who have joined us. Thank you for supporting this piece of legislation.

It's an important signal we're sending, because, you see, the war on terror is different than any war America has ever fought. Our enemies seek to inflict mass casualties without fielding mass armies. They hide in the shadows, and they're often hard to strike. The terrorists are cunning and ruthless and dangerous, as the world saw on September the 11th, 2001, and again in Istanbul last week. Yet these killers are now facing the United States of America and a great coalition of responsible nations, and this threat to civilization will be defeated.

In this new kind of war, our military needs to be fast and smart and agile, and it is. Right now, America's Armed Forces are the best trained, best equipped, and best prepared in the world, and this administration will keep it that way. The bill I sign today authorizes $400 billion over the next fiscal year to prepare our military for all that lies ahead. We will do whatever it takes to keep our Nation strong, to keep the peace, and to keep the American people secure.

First, this legislation respects and supports the men and women of our military and their families, all of whom are a vital source of our national strength. For more than three decades, America has been well served and well defended by our All Volunteer Force. The quality and professionalism of that force has never been higher. Whether you wear four stars or one stripe, our military is making America proud.

In this time of war, our military is facing greater sacrifice. Our men and women in uniform are facing longer separations. Your families are feeling great pride, and sometimes they worry. America is grateful for your willingness to serve, and we are showing our gratitude. This bill authorizes an across-the-board pay increase averaging 4.15 percent. It extends through next year the increase of extra pay earned by servicemembers who volunteer for hazardous duty and who endure long separations from their families. The bill further reduces housing costs for those living off posts. It reauthorizes bonus pay for those with specialized skills. Those who risk their lives for our liberty deserve to be fairly paid and fairly treated. And this bill keeps those commitments.

Second, this legislation helps America remain prepared and fully equipped for the challenges of our time. In our new struggle, threats can emerge suddenly, and so we must always be ready. This bill authorizes funds for realistic training, because battles are won with the effective training of our people.

The Congress has authorized the full $9.1 billion that I requested for ballistic missile defense. The spread of ballistic missile technology, along with the spread of weapons of mass destruction, is a terrible danger to America and to the world, and we must have the tools and the technologies to properly protect our people.

This bill also advances the vital work of transforming the personnel system for civilian defense workers, so that we can place the right person in the right job to meet the challenges we face. Nearly 700,000 civilian defense workers have been laboring under a cumbersome, inefficient system designed for another century. The bill I sign today reforms this system. It gives DOD managers the flexibility to place civilian workers where they are most needed, without needless delay. It speeds up the hiring process so that new employees will not have to face a wait

of many months before beginning their service to our country. It introduces pay-for-performance bonuses and streamlines the promotion process, making a career at the Defense Department more attractive to talented workers.

These are landmark reforms, the most ambitious of their kind in a quarter-century and similar in scope and purpose to those enacted for the Department of Homeland Security. To win the war on terror, America must fully utilize the skills and talents of everyone who serves our country, and this bill will help us achieve that goal.

Every member of the United States military is now involved in a great and historic task, and the stakes for our country could not be higher. We face enemies that measure their progress by the chaos they inflict, the fear they spread, and the innocent lives they destroy.

America's military is standing between our country and grave danger. You're standing for order and hope and democracy in Afghanistan and Iraq. You're standing up for the security of all free nations and for the advance of freedom. The American people and your Commander in Chief are grateful, and we will support you in all your essential missions.

And now it is my honor to sign the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:10 a.m. at the Pentagon. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld; Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, USMC, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; and Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry D. Scott, USN. H.R. 1588, approved November 24, was assigned Public Law No. 108–136.

Statement on Signing the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004

November 24, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 1588, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004. The Act authorizes funding to defend the United States and its interests abroad and provides much-needed flexibility to manage effectively the personnel and taxpayer resources devoted to the national defense.

Section 541(a) of the Act amends section 991 of title 10 of the United States Code to purport to place limits on the number of days on which a member of the Armed Forces may be deployed, unless the Secretary of Defense or a senior civilian or military officer to whom the Secretary has delegated authority under section 541(a) approves the continued deployment. Section 1023 purports to place restrictions on use of the U.S. Armed Forces in certain operations. The executive branch shall construe the restrictions on deployment and use of the Armed Forces in sections 541(a) and 1023 as advisory in nature, so that the provisions are consistent with the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief and to supervise the unitary executive branch.

Section 903 amends section 153 of title 10 to require the Secretary of Defense to provide for a report to the Congress by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of a plan for mitigating risks identified by the Chairman. The executive branch shall construe this provision in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief.

Section 924 places restrictions upon the exercise of certain acquisition authority by the Director of the National Security Agency (NSA). The reference in section 924(b) to section 2430 of title 10, United States Code, authorizes the Secretary of Defense to exclude from the scope of section 924(b) highly sensitive classified programs as determined by the Secretary of Defense. Moreover, the exercise by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics of authority described in section 924 remains subject to the statutory authority of the Secretary of Defense to exercise authority, direction, and control of the Department of Defense under section 113(b) of title 10. The executive branch shall construe and execute section 924 in a manner consistent with these

statutory authorities of the Secretary of Defense, the authority of the Director of Central Intelligence under section 103(c)(7) of the National Security Act to protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, and the constitutional authority of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief.

Section 1442(b)(2)(C) requires executive agency heads to furnish certain reports to the chairman and ranking minority member of "[e]ach committee that the head of the executive agency determines has legislative jurisdiction for the operations of such department or agency to which the information relates." The executive branch shall, as a matter of comity and for the very narrow purpose of determining to whom a department or agency will submit a report under this provision, determine the legislative jurisdiction of congressional committees.

Section 3622 purports to establish an interparliamentary working group involving up to 40 Members of Congress and the legislature of the Russian Federation on nuclear nonproliferation and security. Consistent with the President's constitutional authority to conduct the Nation's foreign relations and as Commander in Chief, the executive branch shall construe section 3622 as authorizing neither representation of the United States nor disclosure of national security information protected by law or Executive Order.

Several provisions of the Act, including sections 320(b)(5) and (e), 335, 528, 647(c)(2), 923(d)(1)(F), and 1051, call for executive branch officials to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation. These provisions shall be implemented in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

A number of provisions of the Act, including sections 111(c), 903, 924, 1202, 1204, 1442(b)(2)(C), 1504(b), and 2808, require the executive branch to furnish information to the Congress or other entities on various subjects. The executive branch shall construe such provisions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

George W. Bush

The White House,
November 24, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 1588, approved November 24, was assigned Public Law No. 108–136.

Remarks to the Troops in Fort Carson, Colorado

November 24, 2003

The President. Thank you all.

Audience members. U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm honored to be in the Rocky Mountain State. I'm honored to be in Fort Carson. More importantly, I'm honored to be in the presence of so many fine Americans, so many great citizens who proudly wear our Nation's uniform.

The soldiers of Fort Carson are now engaged in the largest deployment from this post since World War II. You reflect tremendous credit to the United States Army. You bring great pride to the people of the United States of America.

The people of our Armed Forces are serving at a crucial period for America and for all free nations. We're at war with terrorists who hate what we stand for, liberty, democracy, tolerance, and the rights and dignity of every person. We're a peaceful nation, yet we are prepared to confront any danger. We are fighting the terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan and in other parts of the world so we do not have to fight them on the streets of our own cities. And we will win.

In this war, America depends on our people in uniform to protect our freedom and to keep our country safe, and all who serve depend every day on the support of your families. These are challenging times for military families. You in the Pikes Peak community know that very well. Military life makes many demands on wives and husbands and sons and daughters. You have faced

hardships, and you have faced them together. And I want you to know, our whole Nation is grateful to our military families.

America is also indebted to the men and women of the Guard and Reserve who are serving abroad and to those who are called for homeland security assignments. Hundreds of Reserve units across America have been activated in this time of war. Our country thanks these fine citizens, and we thank their employers for putting duty first.

I want to thank Major General Bob Wilson for his leadership and his strength of character. I want to thank General Larry Ellis, as well, for greeting me here today. It's my honor to have met General Lance Lord, Commander of the Air Force Space Command. I appreciate Colonels Orr, Terry, Wininger, and Resty for being such strong leaders and for greeting me here. It was my privilege to have lunch with Sergeant Major Mac McWilliams. He's the kind of guy you don't want to cross. [*Laughter*] He's the kind of guy you want on your side. I'm glad he's on my side, and I'm glad you're on my side. I appreciate Bill Hybl, who is the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army.

I want to thank the families of the fallen soldiers who are here with us today. Our prayers are with you. We ask for God's strength and God's guidance.

I'm honored that the great Governor of the great State of Colorado is with us today, Governor Bill Owens. We've got some members of the United States Congressional delegation here who are strong supporters of our military and our military families, Congressman Hefley and McInnis, Tancredo, Beauprez, and Musgrave. Thank you all for coming. I'm honored you're here.

The speaker of the house is here; Madam Speaker, thank you for coming, Lola Spradley. The mayor of Colorado Springs and the mayor of Fountain, Mayor Rivera and Mayor Barela, are with us as well. Thank you all for coming. I thank all State and local officials for being here. But most of all, I want to thank you all for coming. It's my honor to be here.

When I landed, when I got off that magnificent bird, Air Force One, I was greeted by a lady named Diane Campbell. She brought her family with her. She's an active volunteer with the Army Family Team Building program. [*Applause*] As I said, she brought her family with her. [*Laughter*]

The reason I bring up Diane Campbell is, oftentimes people measure the strength of America based upon the number of tanks and airplanes we have or the size of our wallets. No, the strength of America lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. You see, people like Diane Campbell are providing training and information to military spouses and families to help them adjust to the life in the Army. See, they're reaching out. They've heard the universal call to love a neighbor just like they would like to be loved themselves. The true strength of America is the American people, because we're a compassionate, decent, caring, loving people, just like Diane Campbell.

I want to thank Diane and all the Army Family Team Building members for your service. I ask you all to reach out a hand to somebody who hurts. I ask you to help us change our country one lonely soul at a time.

For more than 60 years, the units of Fort Carson have been known for training hard and being prepared at all times. Men and women have gone forth from this base to make history, from the Pacific theater in World War II to Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. Many thousands who served in these causes still live here in this area. I don't blame you. [*Laughter*] It's a beautiful part of our country. Our veterans and military retirees played their part in maintaining the greatest fighting force in the world. They kept our country free, and we are grateful to the veterans who are with us here today.

Today, a new generation has been called to great challenges. The soldiers of the Mountain Post have been called to serve in the first war of the 21st century. This war began more than 2 years ago, on September the 11th, 2001, when America was attacked and thousands of our fellow citizens were murdered. The events of that morning changed our Nation. We awakened to new dangers, and we accepted new responsibilities. That day we saw the harm that our enemies intend for us. And last week we saw their cruelty again, in the murders in Istanbul. Today America, Britain, and Turkey and all responsible nations are united in a

great cause: We will not rest until we bring these committed killers to justice.

These terrorists will not be stopped by negotiations or by appeals to reason or by the least hint of conscience. We have only one option: We must and we will continue to take the fight to the enemy.

We fight this war against terror on many fronts. Terrorists hide and strike within free societies, so we're draining their bank accounts, disrupting their plans. We're hunting them down one by one until they can no longer threaten America and other free peoples.

Terrorists need places to hide, to plot, and to train, so we're holding their allies, the allies of terror, to account. Working with a fine coalition, our military went to Afghanistan, destroyed the training camps of Al Qaida, and put the Taliban out of business forever.

In Iraq, where a dictator defied the world, cultivated ties to terror, armed with deadly weapons, America led a mission to make the world safer and to liberate the Iraqi people, and that brutal dictator's regime is no more. Thanks to our great military, Iraqi citizens do not have to fear the dictator's secret police or ending in a mass grave. Thanks to our military, the torture chambers are closed, and the prison cells for children are empty. Thanks to our military, we have captured many members of the former regime, and the rest of them have a lot to worry about.

Recently, in Operation Iron Hammer, our coalition worked with the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and police to strike hard against the forces of murder and chaos. We countered attacks. We seized weapons. We brought coldblooded killers to justice. We're proud of all who participated in these forceful and successful operations. And we're sending a clear message: Anyone who seeks to harm our soldiers can know that our great soldiers are hunting for them.

Our mission in Iraq and Afghanistan is clear to our servicemembers, and it's clear to our enemies. America's military is fighting to secure the freedom of more than 50 million people who recently lived under two of the cruelest dictatorships on Earth. America's military is fighting to help democracy and peace and justice rise in a troubled and violent region. And because we're fighting terrorist enemies thousands of miles away, in the heart and center of their power, we are making the United States of America more secure.

Units from this base have been vital to our campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 7th Infantry Division has done fine work preparing Guard brigades for combat duty overseas, with one battalion in Iraq from the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom; preparing a brigade to deploy and a brigade now in Afghanistan; helping to train the Afghan National Army. We're grateful for the 3d Brigade Combat Team, the 3d Armored Calvary Regiment, the 10th Special Forces Group, the 43d Area Support Group. These and other units are showing the skill and the discipline that define Fort Carson, and you're showing the courage that defines the United States Army.

Today, American forces in Iraq are joined by about 24,000 troops from 32 other countries. Together, we're helping the Iraqi people move steadily toward a free and democratic society. Economic life is being restored to cities of Iraq. A new Iraqi currency is circulating. Local governments are up and running. Iraq will soon begin the process of drafting a constitution, with free elections to follow. As Iraq rejoins the world, it will demonstrate the power of freedom and hope to overcome resentment and hatred. And this transformation will help make America more secure.

The work we are in is not easy, yet it is essential. The failure of democracy in Iraq would provide new bases for the terrorist network and embolden terrorists and their allies around the world. The failure of democracy in those countries would convince terrorists that America backs down under attack. Yet democracy will succeed in Iraq, because our will is firm and our word is good. Democracy will succeed because every month, more and more Iraqis are fighting for their own country. People we have liberated will not surrender their freedom. Democracy will succeed because the United States of America will not be intimidated by a bunch of thugs.

This community knows firsthand that the mission in Iraq is difficult and the enemy is

dangerous. Saddam loyalists and foreign terrorists are attacking the symbols of order and freedom, from international aid workers to coalition forces to innocent Iraqi citizens. Terrorists have chosen to make a stand and test our resolve. Our resolve will not be shaken.

It is the nature of terrorism that a small number of people can inflict terrible grief, and here, you felt loss. Every person who dies in the line of duty leaves a family that lives in sorrow and comrades who must go on without them. The Fort Carson community said farewell to some of your best. One of them was Staff Sergeant Daniel Bader. This good man left behind his wife, Tiffany, and their 14-month-old daughter. Tiffany Bader said this to a reporter recently: "I'm going to wait until she is old enough to realize what happened, and I will tell her exactly what her daddy did for her. He died serving his country so that my little girl could grow up free."

The courage of that soldier and the courage of that wife show the spirit of this country in the face of great adversity. And all our military families that mourn can know this: Our Nation will never forget the sacrifice their loved one made to protect us all.

By the unselfish dedication of Americans in uniform, children in our own country and in lands far away will be able to live in freedom and know the peace that freedom brings. As Americans, we believe that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every person who lives in the world.

As men and women who serve the cause of freedom, each one of you has answered a great calling. You live by a code of honor, in service to your Nation, for the safety and security of your fellow citizens. You and I have taken an oath to defend America. We're meeting that duty together, and I'm proud to be the Commander in Chief of the greatest military, full of the finest people on the face of this earth.

God bless you all. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. in a hangar at Butts Army Airfield. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Robert Wilson, USA, commander, Fort Carson; Gen. Larry R. Ellis, USA, commanding general, U.S. Army Forces Command; General Lance W. Lord, USAF, commander, Air Force Space Command; Col. Joseph E. Orr, USA, deputy commanding general, 7th Infantry Division (Light) and Fort Carson; Col. Walter Wininger, USA, chief of staff, 7th Infantry Division and Fort Carson; Col. Michael Resty, Jr., USA, garrison commander, Fort Carson; Command Sgt. Maj. Terrance McWilliams, USA, Fort Carson; Lola Spradley, speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives; Mayor Lionel Rivera of Colorado Springs; Mayor Ken Barela of Fountain; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks to Reporters at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado

November 24, 2003

Medicare Reform Legislation

Because of key votes in the United States Senate today, we're moving closer to Medicare reform, a reform package that will make the system modern, make sure our seniors have prescription drug coverage, better choices.

I want to commend the Senate for moving the modernization bill forward. I look forward to them completing their work and getting a bill to my desk that I can sign. Modernizing Medicare will make the system better and will enable us to say to millions of seniors, we've kept our promise to America's seniors.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:34 p.m. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message on the Observance of Eid al-Fitr

November 24, 2003

I send greetings to Muslims celebrating Eid al-Fitr, the Festival of Breaking the Fast.

This festival marks the end of the month-long fast of Ramadan, the holiest period of the Islamic year. Eid al-Fitr is a time to give

thanks to God for the blessings of renewed faith, to perform acts of charity, and to share traditional food and good wishes with family and friends. Islam is a religion that inspires its followers to lead lives based on justice, compassion, and personal responsibility.

During this joyful season, I encourage people of all faiths to reflect on our shared values: love of family, gratitude to God, a commitment to religious freedom, and respect for the diversity that adds to our Nation's strength. By working together to advance peace and mutual understanding, we help build a future of promise and compassion for all.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a joyous celebration. Eid mubarek.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Japan-United States Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters

November 24, 2003

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Treaty Between the United States of America and Japan on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, signed at Washington on August 5, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, a related exchange of notes and the report of the Department of State with respect to the Treaty.

The Treaty is one of a series of modern mutual legal assistance treaties negotiated by the United States in order to counter criminal activities more effectively. The Treaty should be an effective tool to assist in the investigation and prosecution of a wide variety of crimes. The Treaty is self-executing.

The Treaty provides for a broad range of cooperation in criminal matters. Mutual assistance available under the Treaty includes: taking testimony, statements, or items; examining persons, items, or places; locating or identifying persons, items, or places; providing items from governmental departments or agencies; inviting persons to testify in the requesting Party; transferring persons in custody for testimony or other purposes; assisting in proceedings related to forfeiture and immobilization of assets; and any other form of assistance permitted under the laws of the requested Party and agreed upon by the Central Authorities of the two Contracting Parties.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Treaty, and give its advice and consent to ratification.

George W. Bush

The White House,
November 24, 2003.

Remarks at Spring Valley Hospital in Las Vegas, Nevada

November 25, 2003

Thank you for the warm welcome. It's great to be here in Las Vegas, the great State of Nevada. I'm sorry I don't get to spend the night here. [*Laughter*] They say the nightlife is pretty active. [*Laughter*] It's a great part of our country. Thanks for your welcome.

I also appreciate the Spring Valley Hospital Medical Center team for hosting us. It's not easy to have the President of the United States come. It seems like the entourages are quite large these days. [*Laughter*] So I appreciate the hard work in facilitating my visit.

It's amazing that this facility is not only—is not yet 2 months old, yet it is providing a really good record of care and compassion. Thanks to the good docs and nurses and CEOs and aides who work here. I want to thank you for caring about your fellow citizens with good, decent health care.

Today—speaking about good, decent health care, today we had a major victory to improve the health care system in America. The United States Senate has joined the House of Representatives in passing historic reform of Medicare that will strengthen the system, that will modernize the system, that will provide high-quality care for the seniors who live in America.

I want to thank and congratulate the Members of Congress for their hard work. You

see, we have a responsibility in Washington, DC, to solve problems, not to pass them on. And today the United States Congress met its responsibility. We inherited a good Medicare system. It has worked, but it was becoming old and needed help. Because of the actions of the Congress, because of the actions of members of both political parties, the Medicare system will be modern, and it will be strong.

I appreciate Karla Perez for hosting us here. She had a very good visit about health care needs in this community and around our country. Karla is an impressive CEO and managing director, and I'm really glad she invited me here. I want to thank Alan Miller, Mike Marquez, and Dan McBride for their leadership as well.

I appreciate so very much your fine Governor, Kenny Guinn, for showing up today. Governor, it's great to see you. He's a close friend, as is Dema. The Governor and I both married very well. [*Laughter*] Laura sends her love to both of you. [*Laughter*]

Two Members of the United States Congress from Nevada are with us today, Congressman Jim Gibbons and Congressman Jon Porter. They supported this piece of legislation. They support a lot of good legislation. And I'm proud of your work, and I appreciate your courage in doing the right thing for America's seniors—by the way, not only the seniors today, but those of us who are going to be seniors.

I also want to welcome Trent Franks from the great State of Arizona, friend, a man who also supported Medicare reform. He and his wife Josie are here to join us today, and I'm honored that you all would come over from Arizona to say hello. I want to thank the Nevada attorney general for joining us, Brian Sandoval. I appreciate members of the statehouse for being here. I'm glad Darlene Ensign is with us, the Senator's good wife—for joining us. Most of all, I'm really glad you all are here, and thanks for letting me come by to say hello.

Today when I landed, I met Maria Konold-Soto. She's a—where is Maria? Oh, there's Maria. Yes. What Maria does is she volunteers in your community on the Medical Reserve Corps. Perhaps you've heard about it. It is a chance to help our communities prepare for a potential emergency. Notice I said "volunteers." A lot of times people talk about the strength of the country in terms of our military might or the size of our wallets. The strength of America is the heart and souls of our fellow citizens who are willing to volunteer to make their communities a better place.

I know a lot of the docs here provide a lot of care for people who hurt. That's part of making America a compassionate place. Maria is part of making America a compassionate place. All of you who volunteer, I want to thank you very much for the job you do. If you're interested in being a patriotic American, love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself, and you'll make a significant contribution to our country.

This Nation's health care is great. We've got the best health care in the world, and we need to keep it that way. We've got a great health care system because of our docs—well trained, decent, caring people who practice medicine. We've got a great health care system because of our nurses who work hard to provide compassionate care. We've got the best research in the world. We're on the leading edge of change in America.

But we've got to keep the system vibrant. And we must keep it the best in the world, which we intend to do in Washington, DC. We started that by making sure our seniors have got a modern system. The Medicare system, first of all, is an essential commitment of the Federal Government. Our Federal Government has made a commitment to our seniors that we will provide them an up-to-date, decent health care system. It's a basic trust that has been upheld throughout the generations.

And we're keeping that trust by making sure the system works, by making sure that our seniors are well treated. In recent years, Medicare has not kept up with the advances of modern medicine. In other words, it hasn't met the trust that the Federal Government has promised to our seniors. Remember, when Medicare was passed in 1965, health care meant house calls and surgery and long hospital stays. And the system was designed to meet the health care delivery systems of

the day. Modern medicine today now includes preventative care, outpatient procedures, and at-home care.

Many invasive surgeries are now unnecessary because of the new prescription drugs which are being developed. Many Americans have coverage for these new forms of health care, and that's positive, and we need to keep it that way. Yet seniors who rely exclusively on Medicare do not have the coverage for many of the new treatments and do not have coverage for prescription drugs. In other words, medicine changed, and Medicare didn't. And as of today, Medicare is changing.

Let me give you an example of the need for modernization. The health care providers here know these examples only too well. Medicare is willing to pay $28,000 for a hospital stay for ulcer surgery. But it won't pay the $500 for the anti-ulcer drugs that would keep the senior out of the hospital in the first place. Those examples—or that example, like many others, says to me we had a problem with the Medicare system. It doesn't make any sense to pay the 28,000 at the end of the process but not the 500 up front to keep the 28,000 from happening in the first place.

Medicare should cover medications to keep our seniors out of the hospitals. The new bill does this. The important part of the reform is to recognize that medicine has changed. It will save our Government and the taxpayers money by providing prescription drugs early so we don't have to pay for it in long hospital stays or invasive surgeries.

Most seniors have got some form of prescription drug coverage from a private plan, and that's important. It's a fact of life here in America. Those plans, however, are becoming less available. We've got to make sure the private sector remains vibrant. The bill I'm about to describe to you does that.

Medicare was very slow to take advantage of new medical advances, besides prescription drugs. In other words, you had to go through a bureaucracy in order to get certain procedures covered. Bureaucracies don't move very quickly. They tend not to be very sympathetic organizations. They're not consumer-driven. They're process-driven. They're hidebound by rules and regulations. The docs here know what I'm talking about. You get to deal with bureaucracies. It must be a frustrating experience. Sometimes it's a frustrating experience to try to change bureaucracies.

The Medicare plan that I'm going to sign understands that a lack of competition meant that there was no real need to provide innovation. And so we're helping to change the system by giving seniors more options and more choices. See, Members of Congress have got choices. They get to choose from a health care plan, and it works quite well. The three Congressmen here would tell you they're probably pretty satisfied with the plan, if they've chosen to be in it. In other words, you get to choose.

This new Medicare bill I'm going to sign says seniors are plenty capable of making choices themselves. I used to say, "If it's good enough for the Members of Congress to have choice, it ought to be good enough for the seniors in America to have choice." Now they're going to have choice, thanks to the bill I'm going to sign.

It's going to take a while for this piece of legislation to kick in. It's going to take about 2 years to get all the reforms in place. But within 6 months of the law being signed, our seniors will start to see real savings in health care costs because seniors will be eligible for a drug discount card that will save them between 10 to 25 percent off their regular drug costs. And low-income seniors will receive up to $600 a year to help them with their drug costs in addition to the card. Their card will serve as a transition to the reforms that are inherent in the Medicare legislation.

When the full drug benefit arrives in 2006, all seniors will be eligible for prescription drug coverage for a monthly premium of about $35. The result is that for most seniors without coverage today, the Medicare drug plan will cut their annual drug bills roughly in half. That's positive news for America's seniors.

It's positive news for Joyce and J.C. Pearson. J.C.'s from Tennessee, by the way, and he reminded me that without Tennessee, Texas wouldn't have been much. [*Laughter*] He reminded me more than once, I might add. [*Laughter*] The Pearsons are—live on a tight budget. They spend about $300 a month for prescription drugs. Under the new

Medicare reform bill passed today, they will save $1,800 a year. Joyce said they can use that money. She said it's going to come in handy in their retirement years.

Seniors with the highest drug bills will save the most. Seniors with the greatest need will get the most help. Low-income seniors will pay a reduced premium or no premium at all and lower or no copayments for their medications.

Under the new reforms, seniors, as I mentioned, will have choices. You see, some seniors don't want to choose, and I can understand that. In other words, people who are on Medicare just don't want to be confronted with a choice, and the system in the bill we passed recognizes that. You can understand why. The person is up in years, and it's pretty comfortable. They don't want to have to change. Change makes some people nervous, and we understand that. And so should seniors want to stay in traditional Medicare and receive a prescription drug benefit, they will now be able to do so. That's one of the key reforms in the bill. But other seniors want to choose. They want to be able to make a selection based upon their own particular needs. Some might want protection from high out-of-pocket medical expenses. Some might want expanded coverage for hospital stays. Some might want to be able to pick a plan that better meets their own individual needs. And under this law, choices will be readily available for our seniors, and that's an important part of reform.

Because, you see, when seniors or any citizen makes a demand, the system responds. If there is a demand-driven system, it means the doctor-patient relationship is going to be more firm, and it means people will have better choices to meet their own particular needs. Some seniors may want the coverage that comes with managed care plans, Medicare+Choice.

Bob May is with us today. Bob is a World War II veteran. He is what I would call a solid citizen. Bob said, "You know," his wife—who unfortunately passed away recently—and he "sat down and analyzed, made a choice, and we weighed the pros and the cons about what health care plan would fit our needs." I want you to hear that carefully. Bob and his wife sat down and said, "Here's the pluses and the minuses." In other words, he's plenty capable of making a choice. He didn't need the Government telling him how to choose what health care plan best met his needs. And so he chose Medicare+Choice, and it works, he said. Under the law, Medicare+Choice will be strengthened, not starved. It is a viable option for our seniors around the country. In other words, people will have more control over their health care options, and health care plans will start competing for their business. And that's positive, positive for the consumers, positive for the seniors of America.

There are other important reforms in this bill. When seniors sign up for Medicare, they will get a complete health examination so that doctors can know their health needs from the start. We're finally beginning to focus on preventative care. It makes sense to include preventative care in any health care reforms. The health care providers here know that better than anybody.

The bill provides incentives for companies to keep the existing coverage they provide for senior retirees. There was some concern in Washington, a legitimate concern, as far as I'm concerned, that a Medicare reform plan would encourage employers to not do their responsibility to their former retirees. This bill addresses that. Two out of every three seniors is now covered by some form of private coverage, and the bill addressed the issue and—to make sure that that coverage is still a viable alternative in the marketplace.

Every American, old and young, will be able to have a health savings account. They will be able to put money aside tax-free to help their families with medical expenses. Medical savings accounts are important part of reform. Medical savings accounts trust the consumers, provides incentives for people to make wise choices, and helps to maintain the doctor-patient relationship.

This bill helps rural hospitals. This would not qualify as a rural hospital here. [*Laughter*] But rural hospitals need help to continue to serve our country. This bill sets fair reimbursement rates for doctors serving Medicare patients. This is a good bill, and I'm looking forward to signing it.

Last Saturday's vote in the House and today's vote in the Senate marks an historic moment, a bipartisan achievement that all Americans can be proud of. Year after year, the problems in Medicare system were studied and debated, and yet nothing was done. As a matter of fact, they used to call Medicare "Mediscare" for people in the political process.

Some said Medicare reform can never be done. For the sake of our seniors, we've gotten something done. We're acting. We acted on principle in Washington, DC. We'll provide new treatments and new choices. We'll get prescription drug coverage they deserve. We'll keep our commitment to Medicare to better the lives of the American seniors for generations to come.

I appreciate the hard work of the Members of the Congress. It's a tough bill. People worked hard on it. A lot of people searched their soul on this complex and important piece of legislation, but they stayed after it, stayed focused on the people. A lot of Members put politics aside, which we need to do in Washington, DC, when we're talking about the people's business.

I appreciate the seniors and the seniors' groups, such as the AARP, who lobbied hard on behalf of a modern Medicare system. People made their opinions known. They let the Members know where they stand. And it worked, and it helped. And I'm honored to put my signature on this historic piece of legislation.

Another topic of conversation came up at our roundtable discussion, and that was the effect of junk lawsuits on the delivery of health care in America and in Nevada. You see, one of the things we must work for is a health care system which is affordable and available. Junk lawsuits, the threat of junk lawsuits, drive up the cost of health care and run good docs out of the system.

It's important for our fellow citizens to understand the effect of junk lawsuits. You see, docs who are threatened and are constantly sued, even though their practice is a good, strong, excellent practice, resort to what's called defensive medicine. They order procedures and tests that may not be needed but are—provide protection in the court of law. You see, if you think a lawyer is simply fishing for a rich settlement, is constantly looking over your shoulder, you'll end up practicing what's called defensive medicine. Docs are afraid to give their patients certain advice. In other words, the doctor-patient relationship is disrupted for fear that that advice will be used against them in the court of law. This problem not only affects the doctors; it affects the patients as well. See, it's running up the cost of medicine. It affects a person's ability to deliver good, quality health care.

Donna Miller is an OB/GYN specialist here in Vegas. Dr. Miller has seen her premiums go up about $28,000 last year, to about $72,000 this year. She thinks they're headed to about $100,000 this year. You know what I'm talking about, about premium increases. It's a system that reflects lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit. And Dr. Miller's patients pay the price. These junk lawsuits are driving up the cost of medicine.

Here's what she says. She says, "You got into medicine to take care of people and to spend time with your patients. With the premiums going up the way they are, you can't do that." She told me about the colleagues who have left Nevada. I remember when your trauma center shut down here. It made national news. It's a clear sign that you've got an issue here that must be dealt with, because the people who are affected are the people of Nevada.

It means that women who want to have their babies delivered in Nevada are having a hard time finding a doc; that's what it means. And I met Jill Forte today, a proud mother. She found out she was pregnant with her second child. She called her doctor. The doctor told her that because of insurance costs, she could no longer deliver her baby. So she started calling around. She was told the same thing—I think she told me, about five different docs. She considered going to California. Fortunately, she was able to make a connection through a friend for a local doc to take her case.

But you see—and let me tell you what she said. She said she was in total shock. She didn't know what was going on until it happened. Looking for a doctor, worried about finding a doctor when you're pregnant, is a stress that is an unnecessary stress. It's a stress caused by frivolous and junk lawsuits.

It doesn't make any sense to have a society that sues so often that expectant mothers are worried about finding a doctor. We've got to do something about this in America.

There's a cost to the Federal Government because of the frivolous and junk lawsuits and the defensive practice of medicine. It is estimated that the defensive practice of medicine raises the Federal budget by $28 billion a year. You see it from Medicare, Medicaid, veterans' health benefits, for example. The junk lawsuits affect our budget. Therefore, I view this as a national problem which requires a national solution. We need a system where patients who are harmed have their day in court, where they can collect damages to cover their injuries or recovery or rehabilitation and loss of income. If you've been harmed by a bad doc, you deserve your day in court. Frivolous lawsuits, by the way, that clog the courts make it very difficult for someone with a legitimate claim to get into the court. When patients can prove they were harmed by a doctor's egregious behavior, they should be able to collect reasonable punitive damages.

There needs to be a $250,000 cap on noneconomic damages. I laid out this proposal to the Congress. The House of Representatives responded in a positive way, and I want to thank the Members here for voting the right way. The bill is stuck in the Senate. You need to contact a Senator in the State of Nevada and let them know you're interested in national medical liability reform. The Senators must understand that nobody in America has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. For the sake of the patients in this State and for the doctors in this State and for the patients and docs around the country, we need medical liability reform now. And the Members of the Senate must understand, this is a compelling national issue, and I will keep it on the front burner until we get the problem solved.

Finally, yesterday, I was in Fort Carson, Colorado, where I had the honor of addressing men and women who wear the Nation's uniform. I just want to share with you right quick our country's foreign policy. In a nutshell, it's "we'll do everything we can to keep America secure." I will not forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. My duty as the President, obviously, is to deal with domestic issues and to tackle tough problems. My duty as your President as well is to keep this country secure. And I had the honor of meeting with men and women who wear the Nation's uniform who are doing just that.

We'll protect our homeland as best as we possibly can. But the best way to protect the homeland is to chase the killers down one at a time and bring them to justice, which is exactly what we intend to do.

Freedom equals peace, as far as I'm concerned. And when you hear us working for freedom in troubled parts of the world, you've just got to know it will lead to peace. We'll deal with the short-term security needs by staying on the offensive. We'll help our children grow up in a free society by bringing freedom to parts of the world that desperately need freedom. Our soldiers—as we head into Thanksgiving, we need to give thanks to our soldiers for their sacrifice, for the honor they bring to our country, for the service they render by bringing freedom to troubled parts of the world. You see, we're bringing freedom in the heart of the Middle East.

Free countries don't develop weapons of mass destruction. Free countries don't attack their neighbors. Free countries listen to the hopes and aspirations of the people who live in those countries. No, America also believes that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person who lives in this world. And this Nation will stay the course to bring democracy and freedom to Afghanistan and Iraq. And by doing so, we will not only help the long-suffering people in those countries; we will make America more secure and the world more peaceful.

Thank you for letting me come today. May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Karla Perez, chief executive officer and managing director, and S. Daniel McBride, chief of staff, Spring Valley Hospital; Alan B. Miller, president and chief executive officer, and Michael Marquez, vice president of acute care, Universal Health Services; Gov. Kenny C.

Guinn of Nevada and his wife, Dema; Representative Trent Franks of Arizona and his wife, Josephine; and Darlene Ensign, wife of Senator John Ensign of Nevada. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Las Vegas

November 25, 2003

Thanks for coming. Go ahead and please be seated. I appreciate you coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. It's great to be in one of America's greatest cities, Las Vegas. The Governor was saying, "Don't you want to spend a little time here, a little quality time?" And I said, "Well, I'm on Government pay"—[*laughter*]—if you know what I mean. But this is a dynamic part of our country. The growth is amazing. The spirit is great. It's such an honor to be here. We did really well in the year 2000 here in Nevada. We're going to do great in 2004 too.

I appreciate you coming. As the Governor said, this is a successful fundraiser. I'll tell you what we're doing: We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in November 2004. I'm loosening up. I'm getting ready. But politics will come in its own time. See, I've got a job to do. I want you to tell your fellow citizens, this President is going to work on behalf of everybody to keep this country safe and secure, prosperous and free.

I appreciate Kenny, who's a good friend, and Dema. They've been friends of Laura and mine for a while. We both married above ourselves. [*Laughter*] Dema is doing a great job as the first lady of this State. Laura is doing a great job as the First Lady of our country. She sends her best. I left her this morning in Crawford. We went for about a 3½ mile walk together across the countryside, had a little time to visit outside the bubble in Washington, DC, and we're going to spend Thanksgiving together. She's a great wife, a wonderful mother, and I'm really proud of the tone she has set and the job she's doing as our Nation's First Lady.

Darlene Ensign is here. I'm proud to call John Ensign, Senator John Ensign, a friend and an ally. I appreciate so very much members from the congressional delegation who are here. You've sent some fine people from Nevada to Washington, DC, starting with Congressman Jim Gibbons. Jim, I thank you, appreciate you. Dawn is with him. Congressman Jon Porter, appreciate you coming, Jon. Laurie is with Jon.

Nevada is such a powerful attraction for people around the country that you've been able to attract some people from the United States House of Representatives who aren't from your great State. [*Laughter*] Trent Franks and Josie Franks came over from the State of Arizona. I want to thank Congressman Franks for joining us today. Frank LoBiondo from New Jersey is with us. I'm honored that Frank is with us. Thank you for coming, Frank. I told old Frank, I said, "Gosh, it's great to see you. Thanks for coming to see me." He said, "I didn't come to see you." [*Laughter*] "I came to be with my fiancee, Tina." [*Laughter*] Happens to live here in Las Vegas.

I'm honored that the Lieutenant Governor is here, Lorrie Hunt—Lorraine Hunt. I appreciate you coming, Lorraine. The chairman of the campaign, chairman of the Bush-Cheney '04 campaign, is your great attorney general, Brian Sandoval. Thanks for coming, Brian. I'm honored that Secretary of State Dean Heller is with us today. Dean, thank you for coming. I appreciate you being here. State Comptroller Kathy Augustine is with us. Thank you for coming, Kathy. Got a lot of other State and local officials. I'm grateful you're here. I appreciate your service to your State and to your county and to your city.

I'm honored that my friend Mercer Reynolds, who's the national finance chairman, is with us. He's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's a business person taking time out of his life to help make sure this campaign is adequately funded. He's doing a really good job, thanks to you all. Larry and Camille Ruvo have done—a lot to do with this event. I'm honored you all are here. Thank you. Appreciate you, Larry.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here with us today. See, it's important to make sure that we're well funded. It's also important to make sure people get on the phones and put up the signs and go to the coffee shops and put out the word that

this is an optimistic and hopeful administration who's getting the job done for the American people.

In the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. This administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Declare—terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and now they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era, and today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, this economy of ours was in trouble, and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America as well as the war to make America more secure and the world more peaceful. All of that affected the people's confidence, but we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get this economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

I believe that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. And so we're returning more money to the people, returning money to help them raise their families. We've reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America, so that every single person has a chance to realize the American Dream.

This economy of ours is reacting to our policy. The American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. The third quarter figures were just revised upward to 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is strong. The job base is expanding. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We're now bringing high standards and strong accountability measures to every public school in America. We've increased the education budgets at the Federal level. But for the first time in our Nation's history, we now expect results in return for the increased funding. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising the bar. We're raising the standards, because we believe every child can learn, and we expect every school to teach, so not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized this Government of ours to create the Department of Homeland Security, safeguard the borders and ports of America, and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for our country's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers. We passed budget agreements to bring much-needed spending discipline to Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The United States Congress deserves a lot of the credit. I appreciate working with Speaker Denny Hastert, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, the good folks from Nevada who are working with this administration. You see, what we're doing in Washington, DC, is we're trying to change the tone of the Nation's Capital. There's too much needless backbiting and endless politics. Instead

of focusing on political process, we're focusing on the people's business by focusing on results.

And those are the kind of people I've assembled in my administration. I've put together one of the greatest teams ever to serve the American people. We've got people from all walks of life, strong, dedicated, honorable Americans who have come to Washington, DC, to serve the people of this country. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a different opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have come far, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society of prosperity and compassion so that every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces and aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for their cause of terror. A collection of killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. The United States of America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs. We're on the offensive. We're aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping. They're helping to build a free country, because they understand a free Iraq will make us all more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. The United States of America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. We believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's—God's gift to every person who lives in the world.

Also understand that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering from AIDS. This great, strong, compassionate land is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We've got challenges here at home as well, and we're equal to those challenges. I just mentioned some nice economic numbers, but we're going to stay focused on a pro-growth economic agenda until everyone who wants to work can find a job. And we're keeping our commitment to America's seniors. Today the United States Senate joined the House of Representatives and passed strong reform that will modernize and strengthen Medicare.

For years, seniors have called for a modern Medicare system that provides coverage for prescription drugs and more health care choices. For years, Washington simply listened and did nothing. Finally, the House and the Senate have acted. This historic legislation is the greatest improvement in senior health care coverage since the enactment of Medicare in 1965. And I look forward to signing this important piece of legislation.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doctor deserve their day in court, yet the system

should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and they therefore affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I have proposed such a solution. I proposed such a solution, and the U.S. House of Representatives, thanks to the Members here, voted for medical liability reform. The bill is stuck in the Senate. It is time for your Senator to understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need medical liability reform now.

I have a responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. Our Nation must promote energy efficiency and conservation. We must work to develop cleaner technologies. We must explore for energy in environmentally sensitive ways. For the sake of our economic security and for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I'm going to continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. There's still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on Government and become independent through hard work. The Congress must work with the administration to continue to build on the success of welfare reform, to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our citizens.

The Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their communities and our country. Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted. One of the great strengths of our country, the people of faith from all religions—people have heard a universal call to help somebody in need. This Government of ours must not fear faith, but it must welcome the good works of our faith-based institutions as we reach out as a society to heal broken hearts, to help the lonely, to say to somebody who wonders about the future of this country, "I love you."

A compassionate society must also promote opportunity for all of us, and that means the independence and dignity that come from ownership. You see, this administration is working for and will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We've got a minority homeownership gap in America. I presented a plan to Congress to close that gap. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts, owning and managing their own health care accounts. We want more people owning their own small business in America, because we understand that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect one another and take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to one in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

The culture of service and responsibility is strong in this country. It's truly one of the strengths of America. You know, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to neighbors in need, and the response has been strong. A lot of people are interested in helping, helping our country by helping somebody who hurts. Our charities are strong, and thank you for helping them. Our faith-based organizations are vibrant.

Policemen and firefighters and people who wear this country's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourself in life. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day. In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people.

All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming, and may God bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:20 p.m. at the Venetian Resort Hotel and Casino. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Kenny C. Guinn of Nevada and his wife, Dema; Darlene Ensign, wife of Senator John Ensign; Dawn Gibbons, wife of Representative Jim Gibbons; Josie Franks, wife of Representative Trent Franks; Brian Sandoval, Nevada campaign chairman, Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, and Larry Ruvo, Nevada finance chairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and Mr. Ruvo's wife, Camille.

Remarks at the Los Olivos Senior Center in Phoenix, Arizona

November 25, 2003

Thanks for coming. I'm thrilled to be at Los Olivos Center. You're kind to have me. And I'm here to talk about some issues facing our Nation, probably an issue you'd like to hear about, which is Medicare. I think you probably have heard of Medicare. [*Laughter*] I think you probably recognize that Medicare needs to be modernized and reformed so it works better for you.

The United States House of Representatives, the United States Senate recently took historic action to modernize and to strengthen the Medicare system so it works for you. I'm here to tell you, I look forward to signing a good piece of legislation which says that our country will keep our commitment to today's seniors and prepare to receive tomorrow's seniors into Medicare—people like me—[*laughter*]—with a system that's modern and strong.

You know, our job in Washington is to tackle problems when we see them, not to pass them on to future Congresses or future Presidents or future generations. I want to thank the Members of Congress for taking on this very difficult issue. I appreciate them for their hard work. Medicare has worked for many people. It got a little old. It got a little tired. It needed to be changed. We changed it, and the system is better for it.

The Members of Congress who are here, I appreciate them coming. Senator Jon Kyl is one of the fine Members of the United States Senate. Congressman Rick Renzi, he's from the north; Trent Franks is from the north—Congressman Franks, and Josie, his wife, is with him; J.D. Hayworth—I don't know if you've ever heard of J.D., but—[*applause*]. They're fixing to call J.D. "Slim," "Slim" Hayworth. [*Laughter*] Jeff Flake is with us. Jeff, I'm honored you're here. Congressman Jim Kolbe from Tucson, Arizona, is with us. I'm honored. These are all fine Members of the United States Congress. I've enjoyed working with them all. They're good,

honest men who care deeply about the citizens of the State of Arizona.

I appreciate Jan Brewer, who is the secretary of state of the great State of Arizona, with us. Your mayor is with us, Skip Rimsza. I'm honored, Mr. Mayor, that you're here. My only advice to the mayor is to make sure you fill the potholes. [*Laughter*] He's been doing a great job of filling the potholes for the people of Phoenix, Arizona. It's a—I know he's fixing to leave office, but I—the people of this city owe him a debt of gratitude for nearly 10 years of great service, great honest public service.

I want to thank Cindy McCabe, who is the executive director of this fine center. I really appreciate you and your staff putting on this event. It's not easy to have the President come. You know, these entourages are quite big—[*laughter*]—a lot of people roaming around when the President is here. But the center has done a fabulous job of welcoming us, and I'm really glad I came.

Mark McClellan is with me. He's a Texan, kind of like I am. And he's the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, the FDA. He's got a huge responsibility, and he's doing a really good job. I appreciate you coming, Commissioner. I'm honored you're here.

You know, a lot of times people talk about the strength of America, and they think in terms of the number of airplanes we might have or, you know, look, the number of soldiers in uniform or the size of our wallets, but that's really not the strength of our country. The strength of America is the hearts and souls of the American people. You think about it. That's what makes this country incredibly strong. It's the fact that people are willing to reach out to a neighbor in need. I call them soldiers in the army of compassion. That's the most important army here in America, in many ways, when you think about it.

I met a soldier. She's probably a general, although she would call herself a simple private. That would be Maybelle Harris. Maybelle, where are you? There she is, Maybelle. She's a Sunshine Lady for AARP. She sends cards to people who are celebrating and/or mourning the loss of a loved one. In other words, she understands that there's a special responsibility for those of us who are fortunate in this country to help people who might have a hurt in their heart.

Maybelle is, since '82—has been a member of the Gold Star Wives club. This is an organization dedicated to assisting widows of military servicemen. Maybelle, I want to thank you for your compassion. I want to thank you for the example you have set. You make it clear that America can change, one heart, one soul, one conscience at a time. And you set a fine example for—particularly people coming up here in America—that in order to be a solid citizen, love your neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. I appreciate your example, Maybelle.

We've got the world's greatest health care system. I hope you understand that. I say that with certainty. We've got the best docs in the world. We've got fabulous nurses. We've got wonderful facilities for people to go to. We've got wonderful research in America. I mean, if you really think about the research we do in this country, the lifesaving research, the pharmaceutical drugs that change people's lives in a positive way, it is—you understand when I say we've got the best health care system in the world.

And we need to keep it that way. We need to make sure it continues to be the best health care system in the world. A lot of that has to do with honoring our obligation to our seniors and to make sure the Medicare system works well. Some it has to do with making sure that we don't have too many lawsuits in our society, which runs good doctors out of practice and runs up the cost of medicine, that makes it hard for people to get good health care.

I believe we need medical liability reform at the Federal level, medical liability reform which will say, "If you get harmed by a bad doctor, you ought to have your day in court." Of course you ought to be able to sue. But we've got to get rid of these frivolous lawsuits that cause our docs to practice defensive medicine, which runs up your cost of medicine and runs some doctors out of practice. This country needs national medical liability reform.

I want to thank Kyl and the Members of the House for supporting these measures. We got a good bill out of the House. It's

stuck in the Senate. [*Laughter*] Some Members of the Senate must understand—and by the way, your Senators don't need this message, but some—maybe in some neighboring States they need it. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in our society. For the sake of good health care, for the sake of keeping our docs in practice, and for the sake of making sure our customers, the patients of America, have health care that's available and affordable, we need medical liability reform at the Federal level.

We need to make sure we've got a Medicare system that works. It's first important to recognize that Medicare is a basic trust between our Federal Government and our citizens. The Federal Government said, starting in 1965, this is our responsibility to make sure our seniors get a health care system that works. And therefore, we have a Federal responsibility to make sure that the health care system is the best we can possibly come up with through law for our seniors.

Part of making sure American health care works is to make sure Medicare is modern, and that's what the bill I am going to sign does. It changes the Medicare system, which needed to be changed. Medicare has not kept up with the advances of modern medicine. That's a fact. And we have a choice in Washington to ignore that fact or to deal with that fact.

When Medicare was passed in '65, health care meant house calls, surgery, and long hospital stays. And that's how the Medicare system was designed, to deal with that type of medicine. Medicine has changed. Modern medicine now means preventative care, which is not a part of Medicare, outpatient procedures, at-home care. In other words, medicine changed. Invasive surgeries are now unnecessary because of miraculous new prescription drugs that have been developed. Think about how much medicine changed since 1965. Medicare didn't change with it.

You know, most Americans have coverage for new forms of health care. That's the fact. But seniors who rely exclusively on Medicare do not, and that's why we needed to change the system. Medicine changed. Medicare hadn't. The Congress dealt with it, and now we can say Medicare is modern. And that's important change for the health care and for quality of life for our citizens.

I'm sure you've heard some question the need to change the system. I will give you an example of why we needed to change it. It's a clear example of why we need to change it. Medicare will pay $28,000 for a needed hospital stay for ulcer surgery. Yet it will not pay for the $500 for the anti-ulcer drugs that would keep the senior out of the hospital in the first place. Now, that doesn't make any sense to me. See, we'll pay the $28,000, but we won't pay the $500 to keep from having to pay the $28,000 in the first place, see.

We needed to change the system. Medicare ought to cover medications that will keep our seniors from getting sick in the first place. And yet it doesn't for those who rely exclusively on Medicare. Medicare was not quick to change as medicine changed. After all, there was a bureaucracy that had to make the decisions. Bureaucracies don't move very fast; they're slow. Bureaucracies are cumbersome.

Many times, it took a law from the Congress to change what was covered under Medicare. And getting laws out of Congress sometimes aren't easy either. It's a cumbersome process. It's not a very good system. Private plans were able to adjust quickly. Private plans were able to meet a consumer's demand. Medicare was stuck, see. It just wouldn't change.

And so one of the things we've done in this new bill and this new system is we recognize that seniors are plenty capable of making choices, that a senior is able to choose. A senior is plenty capable of being able to say, "Here are the pros and cons of these very plans, and I want to take this plan that matches my needs."

One way to get Medicare to change is to give seniors choices. See, Congress has got choices. If you've got a health care plan for the Congress, you can say, "I like this plan," or "I like that plan," or "I might want this." But in Medicare, the old Medicare system, you didn't have that choice. And therefore, the delivery of certain procedures and technologies were slow in coming, and that's not right. The system was stuck in the past, and we needed to do something about it.

And our job in Washington is to solve problems, not pass them on. And that's what we did. This is a good piece of legislation, important reform. It will take about 2 years to get the reforms in place. It's a complex—listen, when you change something that's been in effect since 1965 by legislation, it's—there's a lot of print, a lot of pages. It was a hard piece of work, don't get me wrong. And so it's going to—there's going to be a transition period.

But Congress wisely said, "We've got to do something during the transition period," and what that is, is that seniors will be given a health care card, a prescription drug card that you'll be able to use and be able to get a discount of up to 10 to 25 percent on the drugs you now currently take. That's a positive development. You will get a card within 6 months, a discount card that will allow you to take it to where you're buying your drugs, and you'll get a discount. Plus, if you're a low-income senior, you'll get $600 a year as a credit on that card to help you buy drugs.

Congress was wise in helping with the transition. Congress was smart to enable people to better afford prescription drugs, since prescription drugs is the newest form of medicine relative to the past. When the full drug benefit arises in 2006, all seniors will be eligible for prescription drug coverage for a monthly premium of about $35. The result is that for most seniors without coverage today, the Medicare drug plan will cut their annual drug bills roughly in half. That's positive for our seniors who are relying upon prescription drugs. Seniors with the highest drug bills, of course, will save the most. Seniors with the greatest need will get the most help.

Low-income seniors will pay a reduced premium or no premium at all and lower or no copayments for their medicines. Congress wisely said, "We want to help the lowest-of-income seniors have a modern Medicare system with no premium and no copayments in certain cases." And I appreciate Congress for the compassion.

John Bajusz is with us. He's on the stage. I just had a—by the way, some of these people here and I had a wonderful visit about their current desires and needs and frustrations and worries about their status, particularly with health care. John has high prescription drug costs. He's on a Medicare HMO that provides about $100 in drug coverage a month. But he spends about $500 to $600 a month. That probably sounds familiar to some of you all. You're on a program that helps a little bit. Under the law that I'm going to sign, he will save up to about $2,000 a year in his drug costs. That helps John, at least that's what John told me. [*Laughter*] I take his word for it.

See, we're helping John. We're helping John with a modern Medicare system. He's out of pocket $500 to $600 a month. If you say he spends six and nets 100, it's about $500 a month. He's going to save $2,000. That will come in plenty handy. There's a lot of Johns around America who this bill will help in a very positive way. Under the new reforms, as I told you, seniors will have choices. That's an important part of the bill. We want you to have choices.

Earlier today I was in Las Vegas, and I met with a couple. The man said, "You know, my wife and I, before we chose our Medicare+Choice plan"—maybe some of you are on that plan—"before we chose that plan, we weighed out the pros and the cons. I listed the pros and the cons for a variety of policies, and we picked Medicare+Choice." My point to you is, is that he spent a lot of time trying to figure out what was best for him and his wife. I'm sure some of you do that as well. That's what we want. We want people to be able to have that choice.

Now, I fully understand some on Medicare don't want to choose at all. Some people that are on the current system like where they are, and they're frightened by change. And that's realistic. That's reasonable. I can understand that. And so could the Congress.

And so we said that if you want to stay on Medicare, you can, traditional Medicare. But now we'll have a prescription drug benefit for the first time. And that's important. It's important to recognize that change sometimes isn't a part of somebody's future. But a lot of people want to choose. And choice is important. See, some people will want expanded coverage for hospital stays or protection against high out-of-pocket medical expenses. People ought to be able to pick a plan. And when people pick a plan and they

start choice, then it's amazing what happens. The plans start meeting the needs of the consumer, not the whims of somebody in Washington, DC, who gets to make the decision for you. That's an important part of this bill. This bill introduces choice for our seniors.

I met with the Weavers today, Glenn and Marjorie, from Sun City. They are on Medicare+Choice. They like the plan. See, they picked it out. They said, this plan meets our needs. They want to stay on it. The Government was starving Medicare+Choice for awhile. One of the positive aspects about the bill I'm going to sign funds Medicare+Choice so people like the Weavers have got this plan available for them.

I met with Dick and Willa Key. They were here. They are not retired. They are near retired. They want prescription drug coverage. They want choices. See, they like the way this bill is modeled, because their view is—and I share this view—the more choices available for our American citizens, the more likely it is the health care system will meet their needs, and this bill provides that. Make no mistake about it, it recognizes that the decisionmaker in this process should be you, the American consumer.

There are other reforms I want to mention briefly. Under the new law, when seniors sign up for Medicare, they will get a complete health examination so doctors can know their health needs right from the start. That was very practical by Congress to do that. It seems like to make sense to me that it's very important to diagnose problems early so you can solve them. And so Medicare now, for the first time, will have a complete health examination available for people who sign up. There's obviously an emphasis on preventative care, and that's important.

The bill provides incentives for companies to keep existing coverage for their retirees. I'm sure some of you have worked hard and worked for a private concern, and you've got a health care plan now. And the bill makes sure that that's a health care plan is still available for you, as best as we possibly can. We don't want people saying, "Well, gosh, the Federal Government has now modernized Medicare; we don't have an obligation any more. Go to the Government."

So Congress did a good job of addressing this issue, and I appreciate that. Every American, old and young, will be able to have what's called a health savings account. That makes a lot of sense. People ought to be able to put money aside tax-free to help their families with medical expenses, not only current medical expenses but future medical expenses. The health savings accounts will be set up to encourage people to choose healthy lifestyle choices. When you've got your own money out there for your health care that you can see on a daily basis, all of a sudden, you start making better choices with your life.

And these health savings accounts are not only important for seniors, but they're also important for younger workers as well to be able to utilize. Congress wisely put these in place. Health savings accounts not only will encourage people to make right choices but will make—will help maintain the doctor-patient relationship, which is a vital part of a effective and excellent health care system.

The bill helps rural hospitals. Hospitals in Phoenix don't qualify as rural—[*laughter*]—but some of these Congressmen represent rural hospitals. And this bill wisely helps them continue to be a vital part—to serve the vital part of our country, which is the good folks living in rural America. The bill sets up fair reimbursement rates for doctors serving Medicare patients. This is a good bill, is what I'm telling you. It's an historic achievement. It's a bipartisan achievement.

See, year after year, the problems in the Medicare system were studied and debated, and then nothing ever got done. As a matter of fact, Medicare in the political parlance wasn't "Medicare"; it's called "Mediscare." [*Laughter*] People were scared to talk about Medicare for fear of a political backlash.

And so the problems just festered, and the system got out of date, and people weren't getting the health care that they deserved. And the Federal Government was not fulfilling its obligation to our seniors, and that was wrong.

And so we moved. We moved in spite of the fact that some up there in Washington said that nothing could get done, that it was impossible to make reforms. But we acted. And we acted on some solid principles, providing new treatments and choices for our

seniors, provide prescription drug coverage, keep the commitment of Medicare to better the lives of America's seniors for not only this generation but generations to come.

That's what we're doing in Washington, DC, and it was hard work. It really was. It was a lot of debate and sharp elbows and a lot of political dialog. But the Members focused on the most important job of all, and that was working for the people, working to make sure that we fulfilled our promise. I'm honored to sign this bill. I'm looking forward to it. It's a historic piece of legislation. It wasn't perfect, but I haven't found a piece of legislation that's perfect yet. [*Laughter*] But we're improving the system, and I can say to the Members, job well done.

I also want to talk a little bit about our national defense. My job is to address problems at home, whether it be the economy or health care, whether it be medical liability reform, and to work with the Congress to get things done. My job as well is to protect the American people. It's a solemn responsibility, and I accept it. And I want to thank the Members of Congress for joining me in this important task. See, I'm not going to forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. Our life changed that day, didn't it? It really did.

When we were growing up—when old Senator Kyl and I were growing up, we used to think oceans could protect us. We used to think America could pick or choose where we—how to deal with a gathering threat. You know, if we saw a threat here, we may choose to deal with it or ignore it, because we felt pretty safe here at home. We felt like the enemy could never get to us. They tried on—they hit us pretty hard on Pearl Harbor, but kind of—in our own mind, if the truth be known, we thought that it isn't going to happen again.

And September the 11th, 2001, came, and it happened. It happened in one of our great cities. Thousands of people lost their life. I vowed that day to never forget the lessons. We will do everything we can to protect our people at home, but the best way to protect our people is to chase these killers down and to bring them to justice. The best way to protect our homeland is to deny them sanctuary in countries that might allow them to train or provide them with weapons or training. The best way to protect our homeland is to work with allies and friends who understand the call to history and to share intelligence and to find them.

And that's what we're doing. Yesterday I went to Fort Carson, Colorado. I had the honor of addressing about 6,000 members of our military and their families. The military spirit is high. They understand their responsibilities. I had the chance to thank them for their service to our country, to stand in harm's way. I appreciated so very much their sacrifices in Afghanistan and Iraq.

You see, the issue in Iraq is not only our own security short-term. By removing Saddam Hussein, America is safer. So is the neighborhood. But the long-term issue is to make sure, in the heart of the Middle East, democracy and freedom reign. And that's important for peace. It's essential for peace in the world. Free countries are peaceful countries. People who live in freedom are people that are peaceful people. Free countries don't develop weapons to hurt their neighbors. Free countries focus on the aspirations of their citizens, the hopes of their citizens.

And so we've got a hard task ahead of us in Iraq. But I just want to assure you that we will stay the course; we will do the job; we will not be intimidated by thugs and killers who will kill innocent Iraqis or try to kill our coalition troops to force us out, because I truly believe that when we succeed, we will leave behind a more peaceful world.

Many of you have served our country, and you can understand what I'm about to tell you: Freedom is precious. Freedom is inherent in our soul. Freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's—Almighty God's gift to every person who lives in this world. We will work to protect ourselves, but we'll also work to free people who have been enslaved by tyranny, free those who live in a country where they get tortured if they speak out. We love freedom in America. We will never forget our love for freedom. Our foreign policy is based upon freedom and peace, and we'll succeed.

Thank you all very much. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:33 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Skip Rimsza of

Phoenix; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Statement on the Ongoing Review of the Overseas Force Posture

November 25, 2003

Since the end of the cold war, the once-familiar threats facing our Nation, our friends, and our allies have given way to the less predictable dangers associated with rogue nations, global terrorism, and weapons of mass destruction. We have been actively transforming our defenses to address these changes. While we continue to make progress in the transformation of our uniformed military, it remains for us to realign the global posture of our forces to better address these new challenges.

Beginning today, the United States will intensify our consultations with the Congress and our friends, allies, and partners overseas on our ongoing review of our overseas force posture. We will ensure that we place the right capabilities in the most appropriate locations to best address the new security environment.

U.S. national security is closely linked to the security of our friends, allies, and global partners, and this review will serve to strengthen existing relationships and increase our ability to carry out our defense commitments more effectively. To meet this objective, we will invite the full participation of our friends and allies. And because any initiatives and adjustments resulting from this review must necessarily be comprehensive and affordable, it will be conducted in close consultation with the Congress of the United States. Secretary Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld will describe further our efforts at the NATO ministerial meetings in early December. High-level U.S. teams will begin consultations in foreign capitals in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere following those meetings.

The collective security of free nations depends now more than ever on modern capabilities and security cooperation. A fully transformed and strengthened overseas force posture will underscore the commitment of the United States to effective collective action in the common cause of peace and liberty.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Phoenix

November 25, 2003

The President. Thank you all very much. Thank you for coming. I'm honored that so many people showed up tonight. Jon said, "If you come to Arizona, we may be able to get a couple of folks to come." [*Laughter*] This is a fantastic event. You know what we're doing? We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great national victory in 2004.

I'm honored you're here, I really am. I want to thank you all for coming. It's a big deal that you showed up. It means a lot. You know, I'm getting ready. I'm kind of loosening up. [*Laughter*] But politics will come in its own time. I've got a job to do. I've got a job to do in our Nation's Capital. And as you circulate around this important State, when you go to your coffee shops or your community centers or your houses of worship, you tell them President Bush and his administration is focused on the people's business. We're working on behalf of everybody to keep this country strong and secure and prosperous and free.

My one regret for this evening, Senator, is the fact that Laura isn't with me.

Audience members. Aw-w-w.

The President. No, I know it. I know it. A lot of you would rather have had her than me. [*Laughter*] It shows how wise you are. [*Laughter*] She is a fabulous lady. She is a great wife, a wonderful mother, and she's doing a heck of a good job as the First Lady of this country.

Kyl married well too; I'm honored Caryll is here. I picked two fine people to be the State cochairmen of this campaign, and that's Senator Jon Kyl and Senator John McCain. You've sent two fine Americans to the United States Senate.

We've also got a great congressional delegation, some of whom are here tonight. I'm so honored that Congressman Jim Kolbe is

here. Congressman J.D. Hayworth and his wife, Mary, is here. As I mentioned a little while ago, they're starting to call him "Slim" Hayworth. [*Laughter*] He's looking quite pretty these days. [*Laughter*] John and Shirley Shadegg are here with us today. John, thank you for coming. Cheryl and Jeff Flake are with us today. Josie and Trent Franks are with us today. And finally, Congressman Rick Renzi is with us today. I'm honored that they're—thank you all for coming.

I appreciate working with these fine folks from Arizona. They care deeply about our country. They're strong leaders. They love the people of Arizona. I know you're proud of them. I'm proud to call them friends and allies.

I also want to thank statehouse members who are here. Jan Brewer, the secretary of state, is with us. Jan, thank you for coming. Speaker Jake Flake asked me to watch Congressman Jeff Flake in Washington to make sure he behaved himself. [*Laughter*] But Mr. Speaker, I'm glad you're here. As Jeff came through, he said he's a real, live cowboy. I like coming to States where they have real, live cowboys. You know, Senator, we're keeping pretty good company when people show up to fundraisers in cowboy hats. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate the mayor of this fine city, Skip Rimsza, for being here. Mr. Mayor, you've done a fine job, but most of all, thank you for coming. I do know that the former Governor, Fife Symington, is here. I saw him up close. He's a great Governor for the State of Arizona.

I appreciate my buddy from down south, Jim Click, for being such a great friend—[*inaudible*]—and Jim Simmons. Both of you all have worked hard to make sure this has been a fantastic evening, and I want to thank you. I want to thank the chairman of the Republican Party, Bob Fannin, and I want to thank Mike Hellon, the national committeeman. I want to thank the grassroots activists who are here. It's important to have a successful fundraising operation. Evelyn, thank you for coming. [*Laughter*] It's important to have a active fundraising effort, and we've done well tonight. It's equally important to have an active grassroots effort. You see, you win campaigns when you go and you put up the signs and you get on the telephone and you write the letters. For the grassroots activists here, I want to thank you for what you're going to do on behalf of the Bush-Cheney ticket in '04.

In the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, our economy was in trouble, and recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America, and we went to war to make our country more secure and the world more peaceful. And all those actions affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

Here is what we believe, that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and someone is more likely to find a job. We're returning money to the people. To help them raise their families, we've reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater economic prosperity and more jobs across America, so that

every single citizen in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, this economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger. They just released some new figures on the revised third-quarter growth. It turns out the third quarter grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent. That's the fastest growth in nearly 20 years. You see, productivity is high; business investment is rising; housing construction is strong. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk in Washington about education reform, and there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We increased spending for Title I students. But for the first time, the Federal Government has asked a simple question: Are the children learning to read and write and add and subtract? In return for Federal money, we now expect results. You see, we believe every child can learn. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. Not only do we believe every child can learn, we expect every school to teach, so that not one single child is left behind.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Arizona's farmers and ranchers and entrepreneurs. We passed budget agreements, much-needed budget agreements, to bring spending discipline to Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

And the Congress gets a lot of credit. As I told you, I've enjoyed working with the Members from the great State of Arizona, good, honorable, and decent people. I've got a great relationship with Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist from Tennessee and Speaker Denny Hastert from Illinois. These are fine people.

We're working hard on behalf of the American people. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington. There's too much needless backbiting and petty politics in the Nation's Capital. We're working hard to focus on results to do the people's work, and those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I brought people from all walks of life, all backgrounds to serve the people of America. There has never been a finer administration than the one I put together for the people of this country, and we've had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion, Senator. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we've come far. If you look at the results, we've done a lot. But our work is only beginning. See, I've set great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every single citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of America. It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces, international aid workers, and innocent Iraqi citizens. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of cold-blooded killers is trying to shake the will of the civilized world and trying to shake the will of America. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs.

We're on the offensive in Iraq. We're aggressively after them. We're striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we will not have to face them in our own cities. Other nations are helping, and there is a simple reason: They understand that a free Iraq will make the world more secure. And we're standing with the Iraqi people as

they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. And we will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. We believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to every person who lives in the world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. On the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power, the healing power of medicine, to millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS. This incredibly strong and powerful Nation is a compassionate nation, and we are leading the world in this very important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home as well, and we will be equal to those challenges. This administration will stay focused on a progrowth economic agenda until everyone who wants to work can find a job.

We are keeping our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. For years, seniors have asked that the Federal Government keep its commitment, its solemn promise, by having a modern Medicare system that provides preventative care and prescription drugs and health care choices for our seniors. And Washington listened to those seniors but didn't do anything. Finally, the House and the Senate have acted. They've approved legislation that will bring modern medicine to our seniors. This historic legislation is the greatest improvement in senior health care coverage since the enactment of Medicare in 1965. I look forward to signing this bill.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doctor deserve their day in court, yet the system shouldn't reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care. They affect the Federal budget, and therefore, medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution. I submitted a good plan to the Congress. The House of Representatives acted. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. I want to thank Senator Kyl and Senator McCain for working for this important legislation. Certain Members of the Senate must understand, however, that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need medical liability reform now.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate—not this Senator, not Senator McCain—are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some Members to stop playing politics with American justice.

Congress needs to get an energy bill to my desk. We need a comprehensive energy plan in this country. We need to encourage conservation, develop cleaner technology. We need to do a lot of things. But one thing we need to do is to become less dependent on foreign sources of energy. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, I need an energy bill to my desk.

Our strong and prosperous Nation must also be a compassionate nation. I'll continue to advance our agenda of compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the most effective and innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens who hurt. See, there's still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on our Government and become independent through work. I want to work with Congress to build

on the success of welfare reform, to bring work and dignity into the lives of more of our citizens.

Congress needs to complete the "Citizen Service Act" so that we can encourage more Americans to serve their communities and their country. We need to get the Faith-Based Initiative finished. I proposed a Faith-Based Initiative which will empower the armies of compassion which exist all across America to help the homeless, to mentor the children, to offer hope to the addicted. This is a great nation because we're a nation of many faiths. People are free to worship any way you see fit. But there's a commonality to our faiths, the call to help somebody—hurt. Our Government should not fear faith. We ought to welcome faith into helping cure some of the intractable problems of our society.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for everyone, including the independence and dignity from ownership. My administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America. I proposed a plan to the Congress to close that gap. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want people owning and managing their own health care plans. We want more people owning their own small business. This administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, respect their opinions and respect their beliefs. And people take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. America's culture is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're lucky enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. In a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

The culture of service and responsibility is strong in this great country. It's truly one of the great strengths of America. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps right after September the 11th. It was a chance to give people a web portal in which to find out how to volunteer in their communities, and the response has been really strong. Americans care about their neighbors. Our charities are vibrant. If you're involved in a charity or a faith-based group, thanks for what you're doing. You're making America a better place.

Our policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform—[*applause*]—you haven't even got the punch line yet. [*Laughter*] People who wear the uniform remind us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. You know, once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day. In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people.

All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of our country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you for coming. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at the Arizona Biltmore Resort & Spa. In his remarks, he referred to Franklin "Jake" Flake, speaker pro tempore, Arizona House of Representatives; Mayor Skip Rimsza of Phoenix; former Gov. Fife Symington of Arizona; Robert Fannin, Arizona State chairman, and Mike Hellon, Arizona national committeeman, Republican National Committee; and former President Saddam Hussein of

Iraq. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks to the Troops at a Thanksgiving Dinner in Baghdad, Iraq

November 27, 2003

Thank you. I was just looking for a warm meal somewhere. [*Laughter*] Thanks for inviting me to dinner. General Sanchez, thank you, sir, for your kind invitation and your strong leadership. Ambassador Bremer, thank you for your steadfast belief in freedom and peace. I want to thank the members of the Governing Council who are here, pleased you are joining us for one of our Nation's great holidays. It's a chance to give thanks to the Almighty for the many blessings we receive.

I'm particularly proud to be with the 1st Armored Division, the 2d ACR, and the 82d Airborne. I can't think of a finer group of folks to have Thanksgiving dinner with than you all. We're proud of you. Today Americans are gathering with their loved ones to give thanks for the many blessings in our lives, and this year we are especially thankful for the courage and the sacrifice of those who defend us, the men and women of the United States military.

I bring a message on behalf of America: We thank you for your service; we're proud of you; and America stands solidly behind you. Together, you and I have taken an oath to defend our country. You're honoring that oath. The United States military is doing a fantastic job. You are defeating the terrorists here in Iraq so that we don't have to face them in our own country. You're defeating Saddam's henchmen so that the people of Iraq can live in peace and freedom.

By helping the Iraqi people become free, you're helping change a troubled and violent part of the world. By helping to build a peaceful and democratic country in the heart of the Middle East, you are defending the American people from danger, and we are grateful.

You're engaged in a difficult mission. Those who attack our coalition forces and kill innocent Iraqis are testing our will. They hope we will run. We did not charge hundreds of miles into the heart of Iraq, pay a bitter cost in casualties, defeat a brutal dictator, and liberate 25 million people only to retreat before a band of thugs and assassins.

We will prevail. We will win because our cause is just. We will win because we will stay on the offensive. And we will win because you're part of the finest military ever assembled. And we will prevail because the Iraqis want their freedom.

Every day, you see firsthand the commitment and sacrifice that the Iraqi people are making to secure their own freedom. I have a message for the Iraqi people: You have an opportunity to seize the moment and rebuild your great country based on human dignity and freedom. The regime of Saddam Hussein is gone forever. The United States and our coalition will help you, help you build a peaceful country so that your children can have a bright future. We'll help you find and bring to justice the people who terrorized you for years and are still killing innocent Iraqis. We will stay until the job is done. I'm confident we will succeed, because you, the Iraqi people, will show the world that you're not only courageous but that you can govern yourself wisely and justly.

On this Thanksgiving, our Nation remembers the men and women of our military, your friends and comrades who paid the ultimate price for our security and freedom. We ask for God's blessings on their families, their loved ones, and their friends, and we pray for your safety and your strength as you continue to defend America and to spread freedom.

Each one of you has answered a great call, participating in an historic moment in world history. You live by a code of honor: service to your Nation for the safety and the security of your fellow citizens. Our military is full of the finest people on the face of the Earth. I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief. I bring greetings from America.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 6 p.m. at Baghdad International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, USA, commander, Coalition Joint Task Force Seven; L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One

November 27, 2003

President's Visit to Iraq

The President. I thank you for honoring the confidentiality necessary to pull this off. I made the decision to go because I wanted our troops not only that were there to have dinner but the troops in harm's way to know that their Commander in Chief and, more importantly, their country support. And I thought the best way to do that would be to spend time with them on Thanksgiving to thank them and to send a message—you know, the message I sent, which is we appreciate their sacrifices.

You know, Thanksgiving has got to be hard for young troops, to know that their families are gathered, having dinner, a turkey feast and everything. That's got to be a lonely moment for them. And I felt like at this point that it would be—hopefully, it would help them to see their President. And I recognize that I didn't see every troop in harm's way scattered throughout the region, but the word will get out, thanks to you all.

The idea first came up in mid-October. Andy said, "Would you be interested in going to Baghdad?" And I said, "Yes, I would, except I don't want to go if it puts anybody in harm's way. It's very essential that I fully understand all aspects of the trip, starting with whether or not we could get in/out safely, whether or not my presence there would in any way cause the enemy to react and therefore jeopardize somebody else's life."

I felt it was important to send a message that we care for them and we support them strongly and that we erase any doubt in their minds as to whether or not the people stand with them. You know, I understood the consequences and risks. And over time, I was assured by the planners and, as importantly, our military people and the pilot here of this airplane that the risk could be minimized if we were able to keep the trip quiet. I was fully prepared to turn this plane around.

I thought a crucial moment yesterday was when I saw you all. That's why I said, you know, no phones. A crucial moment in this trip, frankly, was in between changing planes, and I wasn't sure whether or not—and the circle is pretty tight—I wasn't sure whether or not people would be able to tell their loved ones, "I can't see you on Thanksgiving, and I can't tell you why." So I was worried about that, but I was fully prepared to turn this baby around and come home.

And 3 hours out, I checked with our Secret Service, who checked with people on the ground. They assured me that it was still a tight hold on the information and that the conditions on the ground were as positive as could possibly be. I even went up to the cockpit and watched Tillman bring it in—which, had the security been broken, there would have been the time that we would have been most vulnerable. However, the plane—that's why Colonel Tillman's judgment was so important to this—this plane is protected; it's protected against the kinds of things that could be used against it. It also—we obviously flew in in the dark; precautions were taken.

At any rate, it was an emotional moment to walk in that room. The energy level was beyond belief. I mean, I've been in front of some excited crowds before, but this was—the place truly erupted, and I could see the, first, look of amazement and then look of appreciation on the kids' faces. Working the crowd, a soldier said to me, "I'm so glad you came. Thanks for coming. It's important for us to know that the people of America support us, and the fact that the President would come confirms that in this soldier's mind." And I think it confirmed in a lot of soldiers' minds.

Anyway, I'd be glad to answer any questions.

Q. How'd you slip out of Crawford?

The President. "How'd I get out of Crawford," was the question. The agents, the Secret Service—well, first of all, I didn't slip

out, because I had to tell my family—that would be my wife and daughters—that I would not be there for Thanksgiving today. My mother and dad came over from College Station, thinking they would see me. They did not know I was not going to be there.

So they knew—Laura knew, and the girls knew. I assured them that I wouldn't be going if it wasn't well thought out and well planned. They understood. I think the girls thought it was a great thing to do, to go see the—go thank our troops. A lot of the kids are their age, 22 years old, and younger. And Laura was pleased that I had decided to go. I comforted her about the—you know, I assured her that I wouldn't be doing this if I wasn't confident we could get in and out of there safely. That was very important.

They pulled up kind of a plain-looking vehicle with tinted windows, and I slipped on a baseball cap and pulled her down, as did Condi. We looked like a normal couple. [*Laughter*]

Q. On your way to the Wal-Mart. [*Laughter*]

The President. To buy some Berkeley Power worms. [*Laughter*]

Q. Pulling a bass boat behind you? [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes, exactly. [*Laughter*] We encountered some traffic. I–35, as you know, if you're a Texan—well, you know. Anyway, Thanksgiving traffic, a lot of people heading up to Dallas, so we were about, I guess, 10 minutes late to the plane. But he kept moving. There were plenty of vehicles out there; there just were. There were people out there.

Then we got here, to TSTC. They had a bunch of people go in the front, and I came up the back.

Q. The footman's entrance.

The President. The footman's entrance. Glad to know how the people live. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, do you think Americans mind that you just slipped——

The President. I think Americans understand that we've got a bunch of kids in harm's way and that the President, if it can be done safely, owes an explanation of thanks and thanksgiving to these kids. Had I not been convinced it could be done and done properly, I wouldn't have gone. I think Americans also understand that, had we announced this, had I gone in to thank our troops with the flurry of announcement and all the analysts talking about it ahead of time, it would have put me in harm's way, and it would have put others in harm's way, including yourselves.

So I think the American people appreciate me going to express their sentiments to these kids. These people are sacrificing for our freedom and our peace. We are at war with terror, and we are in the process of changing Iraq, which will make America more secure, and Americans appreciate that a lot.

Meeting With Members of Iraq's Governing Council

Q. Mr. President, we were told you got to see Mr. Chalabi today?

The President. I did see Chalabi. I met with—well, let's see, I had the dinner. You saw that. I wasn't sure how long you were there. You probably timed it, but an hour or so—are these the times? Oh, these are the people there.

I shook a lot of hands, saw a lot of kids, took a lot of pictures, served a lot of food, and we moved on to see four members of the Governing Council—the names are here. Talabani is the head of it right now, so he was the main spokesman. But Chalabi was there, as was Dr. Khuzai, who had come to the Oval Office—I don't know if you all were in the pool that day, but she was there—she was there with him and one other fellow, and I had a good talk with them.

We were there for about maybe a little less than 30 minutes. I was able to assure them that we were going to stay the course and get the job done, but I also reminded them what I said publicly, that it's up to them to seize the moment, to have a Government that recognizes all rights, the rights of the majority and the rights of the minority, to speak to the aspirations and hopes of the Iraqi people. I assured them that I believe in the future of Iraq, because I believe in the capacity of the people to govern—as I said, govern wisely and justly. I meant what I said. I told them that privately. I told them I back Jerry Bremer 100 percent. He's got my full confidence. He was sitting right there as well. We had a nice visit.

They assured me that they were making good progress, that the Iraqi people are overwhelmingly pleased that Saddam is gone, that they do see a bright future, and they want us to—they want to work with us.

Q. What do you make of what some of the ayatollahs have said lately about the need to have elections sooner and some of the concerns they've expressed about the process?

The President. Well, I think that—as I explained to these Governing Council members, to get where they need to be is going to require debate and discussion, and that's healthy. You know, the fact that there are different opinions being discussed is positive. It's a positive sign that things are different inside of Iraq.

It took us a while to get from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution. So we've got to be realistic and patient about how they proceed. I think the game plan they've got now in place is a good plan. The Governing Council came up with the plan. I supported it. We discussed the overarching flaw that they're discussing. They understand the basic—the notion of human rights and the dignity of each person. I'm confident they'll get to where they've got to be.

President's Visit to Iraq

Q. Was there any point along in the planning for this trip that you looked at it and thought, you know, this might be too risky, maybe we should——

The President. Yes, all along. I mean, I was the biggest skeptic of all.

Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card. Yes, he was. [*Laughter*]

The President. Our planners worked hard to answer every question, and I had a lot of questions. John Abizaid, who I just spoke to by phone, thanking him for the trip—he chose not to come here because he wanted to be with his troops. And I understand that and appreciate that. But he was a very enthusiastic backer of this idea. But I also made sure that people interfacing with Abizaid knew that at any time he wanted us to pull out, I would do so. It was very important for John Abizaid and Jerry Bremer to be comfortable—John—Sanchez, General Sanchez, to be comfortable with this trip. And they were comfortable all the way through.

I think we addressed every issue. Hagin is the point man in the administration for this. He did a fabulous job of addressing the details. I sat down with Colonel Tillman on one of our trips recently and just said, "Look, I need to know, what does it take to get into Baghdad now, and how risky is it?" And he said, "Sir, I wouldn't take you in there if I wasn't convinced that we could do this in a way that would safely bring you to the troops."

I wouldn't have asked you to come if I didn't think it was safe. I would not have put you in this position.

Q. Was there a moment when you thought it wasn't going to happen——

The President. No, no. It was moving all along, but I was pretty tough. In Vegas, I called in and still had more questions about how this was going to happen. Andy was there, and I was pushing hard. Yesterday I sat down on CIVITS out of Crawford with Condi and Andy and the Vice President, went around one more time just to make sure everybody knew all the details. People knew different aspects of it, but these three knew all the details and were confident that it was the right thing to do.

It is the right thing to do. Having seen the reaction of those troops, you know it was the right thing to do, and the word will get out. And their parents will appreciate it, and their loved ones will appreciate it. I went over there to thank them and not only thank them but to remind them our country stands with them and that we will stay the course until the job is done.

I met with—then we went from the Governing Council—I met with the key generals and colonels, the commanders in the field. They reported to me that we're on the offensive, that we're using the tools necessary to suppress the handful of the killers, and we're making good progress, and that the spirit of the troops is high; they understand the mission and the goal. And I was pleased to be able to talk with these men and women as well. It's an important moment. They needed to see me. They needed to see—because they don't read—they don't get to see me all the time. Sometimes they read things. And they

got to see me. They saw my determination and my support and respect for what they're doing.

Meeting With Baghdad Area Leaders

Communications Director Dan Bartlett. You might want to remind them about the Baghdad officials.

The President. What?

Director Bartlett. Two Baghdad officials.

The President. Oh, met the chiefs—head of the—two council members, the chief of the council and one of his compatriots—Baghdad. Bremer tells me crime in Baghdad is down by something like 38 percent. The chairman was very positive and optimistic and very thankful, by the way. To a person, the Iraqi leadership I met with are incredibly thankful and generous with their praise of what America has done for them.

But that was a good meeting. It was getting down to the grassroots level, to—you've seen me enough to know when I see these mayors, I tease them about filling the potholes. That's what—you know, they've got a job to do, and they're doing it. I didn't say, "Fill the potholes," by the way. [*Laughter*] But I did encourage them, to let them know that we have confidence in their ability to self-govern, and we respect their culture, and we want to help them.

President's Visit to Iraq

Q. Did you tell any Members of Congress that you were going to make——

The President. Do what now?

Q. Did you inform any Members of Congress or anything?

The President. No.

Q. We're still a little unclear about when you told the First Lady.

The President. Oh. Well, I told her that—she knew all along—actually, I didn't mean Laura and the girls. I meant the girls. Laura knew from—we first started talking about this seriously on the trip to Asia. She was on the trip. I said, "Look, I'm thinking about going to Baghdad." And as the planning got more and more in place, I informed her more and more in place—that it was more and more in place. I was more and more comfortable.

And she asked me yesterday morning, am I going? I said, "Yes, I'm going." And so I told her yesterday—she knew I was going, or planning on going, because I told you I'd pull the plug if I needed to. And I said, "It looks like we're on." And then the girls came up from Austin in the afternoon, and that's when I told Barbara and Jenna, with Laura there, that I was going to Baghdad.

Q. Mr. President, you talked about talking to the generals and the colonels and about the more aggressive stance they've taken recently. You know, Secretary Rumsfeld said recently it's hard to get a grasp for whether or not we're making progress. Did you get a sense of what they're doing and how we can actually measure whether or not we're making headway?

The President. Well, one way you measure is how many people you bring to justice. And they feel like they're making good progress. You can measure based upon feedback from the ground. That's what they get. And that's—they're upbeat. They just said, "Mr. President, we'll stay the—you stay the course. We'll succeed." And my message was, "I know you'll succeed, and I'm here to tell you we're going to stay the course."

And I asked the General Sanchez about the recruitment of Iraqi citizens into these different security elements. He said, "It's strong. Training is going well." The Iraqi people and the Governing Council all thought the same. They want to be on the frontline of their own security, and that's a positive development. And so I was pleased with the report.

Personal Aide Blake Gottesman. Thank you, everyone.

The President. Good job.

Q. What kind of ball cap was it? What did it say on it?

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice. Mine was in my bag, it was——

Q. A Cleveland Browns hat?

Q. It was actually—I didn't have a Cleveland Browns hat.

Q. That would have been a dead giveaway.

Dr. Rice. That would have been a dead giveaway.

The President. Here are the names of the people here.

Q. We would love to get some video of you up here sometime, sir.

Q. What does it say, Blake?

The President. ——something like this.

Q. Did you really pull it down that low?

The President. No. We had pretty tinted windows. We went through a gate where——

Q. They thought, "Who in the world is that?"

The President. Eddie said, "We're coming to a gate."

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, I'm telling you, this is—again, had this been jeopardized in any way, we wouldn't put myself and/or you all in this position. And we were very—we were cautious, and we needed to be. And I want to thank you for honoring that. This is an historic trip. And it'll reverberate in such positive ways for these kids who are—and these soldiers who are far away from home serving us. And it's exactly what I wanted to do.

Q. Thank you.

Historic Presidential Visits to Combat Areas

Q. Did you look back at any precedents of any other President's trips?

The President. There is no precedent in the war on terror. This is the first war of the 21st century, unique in its nature. But I don't know. I guess you all need to do that. I don't know whether or not—I think Lyndon Johnson went as a Vice President or as President. I don't know.

Q. He was in Asia, and he made an unscheduled trip.

The President. Into Vietnam as President?

Q. Eisenhower went to Korea as a——

The President. Franklin Roosevelt went to north Africa, but the front was in Tunisia, I think, but maybe not.

Q. Abraham Lincoln went to Richmond a couple of days after——

The President. He sure did. I got the picture of the White House of the—Lincoln with his generals and Admiral Porter talking about the peace. I think that's what you're talking about.

Q. But he was mobbed by people when he went to—this was a couple of days after he fell.

The President. Right. And he was on a boat outside of Richmond, unfortunately called "The Peacemakers." It had a wonderful rainbow behind he and his generals. That's where he's talking about making sure the peace was fair and generous so that the United States would stay united.

And, interestingly enough, the original is in the—upstairs in the Treaty Room in the White House. And it is in the Pentagon as well, a copy of it, which I found to be very—so I remember going into the Pentagon and—somebody took—[*laughter*].

But thanks for honoring it.

Q. I appreciate it.

The President. You're a credit to your Nation, a credit to your profession.

NOTE: The President spoke aboard Air Force One en route to Andrews Air Force Base following his departure from Baghdad at approximately 8 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Col. Mark Tillman, USAF, commander, Presidential Airlift Group; Ahmad Chalabi, Jalal Talabani, and Raja Habib al-Khuzai, members, Iraqi Governing Council; L. Paul Bremer III, Presidential Envoy to Iraq; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, combatant commander, U.S. Central Command; Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, USA, commander, Coalition Joint Task Force Seven; and Joe Hagin, Assistant to the President and White House Deputy Chief of Staff. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

November 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

November 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Colorado Springs, CO. Upon his arrival in the afternoon at Peterson Air Force Base, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Diane Campbell.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Fort Carson, CO, where he had lunch with members of the U.S. military. Later, he met with families of U.S. servicemembers who died in Iraq.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Peterson Air Force Base and then traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

November 25

In the morning, the President traveled to Las Vegas, NV. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had an intelligence briefing. Upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Maria Konold-Soto. Later, at Spring Valley Hospital, he met with health care professionals and seniors to discuss Medicare and medical liability reform.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Phoenix, AZ, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Maybelle Harris. Later, at the Los Olivos Senior Center, he met with seniors to discuss Medicare reform.

In the evening, the President returned to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dennis C. Shea to be Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development for Policy, Development, and Research.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark J. Warshawsky to be Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roger W. Wallace to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-American Foundation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jack Edwin McGregor and Scott Kevin Walker to be members of the Advisory Board of the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.

The President announced the appointment of James R. Wilkinson as Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Communications.

The President announced the appointment of Sean McCormack as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of the National Security Council Press Office.

November 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with interim President Nino Burjanadze of Georgia to discuss political reforms in Georgia.

In the evening, the President traveled to Baghdad, Iraq, arriving the following afternoon.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Premier Wen Jiabao of China to the White House for an official visit on December 9.

November 27

In the late afternoon, at Baghdad International Airport, the President had Thanksgiving dinner with members of the U.S. military stationed in Baghdad. Later, he met with four members of the Iraqi Governing Council and then senior U.S. military personnel stationed in Baghdad.

In the evening, the President traveled to the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, arriving early the next morning.

November 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted November 24

Jane J. Boyle,
of Texas, to be U.S. District Judge for the Northern District of Texas, vice Jerry L. Buchmeyer, retired.

Submitted November 25

Linda Morrison Combs,
of North Carolina, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Donna R. McLean, resigned.

Marcia G. Cooke,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida, vice Wilkie D. Ferguson, Jr., deceased.

Curtis V. Gomez,
of Virgin Islands, to be Judge for the District Court of the Virgin Islands for a term of 10 years, vice Thomas K. Moore, term expired.

Jack Edwin McGregor,
of Connecticut, to be a member of the Advisory Board of the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, vice Vincent J. Sorrentino.

Scott Kevin Walker,
of Wisconsin, to be a member of the Advisory Board of the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, vice Anthony S. Earl.

Roger W. Wallace,
of Texas, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Inter-American Foundation for a term expiring October 6, 2008, vice Fred P. DuVal.

Mark J. Warshawsky,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Richard Clarida, resigned.

Juan R. Sanchez,
of Pennsylvania, to be U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, vice Jay C. Waldman, deceased.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released November 22

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 79 and H.R. 2559

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 274, H.R. 3054, and H.R. 3232

Released November 24

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Claire Buchan

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1588

Released November 25

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Claire Buchan

Fact sheet: A Great Day for America's Seniors: Historic Passage of a Broadly Bipartisan Medicare Modernization Bill

Released November 26

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary Claire Buchan

Statement by the Deputy Press Secretary: Official Visit by Premier Wen Jiabao of China

Released November 28

Transcript of a press gaggle by Communications Director Dan Bartlett on the President's visit to Iraq

Acts Approved by the President

Approved November 22

H.R. 274 / Public Law 108–131
Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act

H.R. 2559 / Public Law 108–132
Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2004

H.R. 3054 / Public Law 108–133
District of Columbia Military Retirement Equity Act of 2003

H.R. 3232 / Public Law 108–134
To reauthorize certain school lunch and child nutrition programs through March 31, 2004

H.J. Res. 79 / Public Law 108–135
Making further continuing appropriations for the fiscal year 2004, and for other purposes

Approved November 24

H.R. 1588 / Public Law 108–136
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004

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